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New Routes

A JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH AND ACTION

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Israel-Palestina prospects for peace

Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, Holy City to three religions, and the navel of the world. Where is the path to reconciliation and peace?

Languages in Latvia
The ethno-security drama is a story of progress, p.4



Right of return confusions, p. 22

Globalisation means new routes for Life & Peace, p. 36



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Contents

3 Editorial

4 Securing survival

Andres Kahar looks at the politics of 'etno-security' in Latvia.

12 Peace under siege

Colin Chapman offers an overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

20 Churches appeal for Peace

Two important messages, from and to the churches in Jerusalem.

22 Right of return

Jerome M. Segal dissects the issue of refugee return to Israel-Palestina.

28 Track II anti-incitement

Joe Bock observes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the lens of lessons learned from South Asia.

35 New routes for Life & Peace

Eskil Jonsson discusses the issues of globalisation and religion as a backdrop for new challenges.

38 Sources for healing

Rienzie Perera shares some lessons from peace and justice work in Sri Lanka

39 LPI news

New Director – Delegation to Congo-Brazzaville – Executive Committee sets new course – Consultations – New staff

Editorial

Peace can break. Breaking out, breaking down or simply just breaking up of its own accord, peace, and the processes which we identify it with, are often fragile.

There is perhaps no better and more current example of this than the implosion of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process over the last several months. Just when negotiations were beginning to tackle some of the most concrete – albeit most difficult – issues facing a political settlement; Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, security guarantees to name a few, events overcame overtures and the break down of the peace process was a fact. A new *intifadah* has been unleashed and politicians on all sides harden themselves with rhetoric and ultimatums.

At the same time, a peace process paradigm shift may be in order. When does peace become 'harder', less breakable? We witness daily the behavior of political representatives such as Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat, but perhaps we're looking in the wrong direction. We look to elected officials, perhaps rightly through our vague but determined beliefs in 'democracy'. Yet as we've seen, politicians make, and break, many accords.

In this issue of *New Routes*, we look at the recent events of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts from both conventional and less-conventional views on the issues, and yes, the actors. Colin Chapman takes us through some historical transformations of the conflict with a view as to what political leaders have done and might have done. Jerome M. Segal compliments Chapman's picture with an illustration of one of the most pressing issues in the conflict, accord or no accord – the human toll, refugees. Joe Bock, however, takes us one step beyond the fragility of the peace process and delves into the question of whether or not peace in the Middle East can be 'hardened' through the interventions of civil society, or 'track two' approaches.

As of this writing, the violence still continues and many

of us are still left wondering what can be done to permanent the peace that so many work for, where so many resources are spent. Perhaps one answer may be found in the small country of Latvia on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. Andres Kahar looks at the security of this potential conflict hotbed, one of not so many former republics of the Soviet Union that, despite ethnic divides has managed to avoid conflict through a combination of international intervention, and once again, the support of civil society actors.

Cases of the strength and weakness of peace can be found everywhere and the current research to examine and compare them is as intense today as it is ambitious. What seems clear is that there is something to be gained through this, and particularly through the lens of civil society, even though unique solutions must be found for each unique case.

Over the years, *New Routes* has highlighted a number of such examples with the aim of better understanding the dynamics behind the conflicts, and sometimes behind the peace. Many of our authors have stuck their necks out to bring you these stories of collapse, but also sometimes amazing courage. As this is my last issue as an editor of *New Routes*, I would like to thank our contributors most especially for your most valuable contributions to this, our journal of peace research and action. I'll be taking your ideas with me to my new assignment to another region in need of a more durable peace, Kosovo.

My advice to you our other readers: take those ideas and other 'lessons learned' with you wherever you may go. Sometimes the hope for the future may be found in the wisdoms of the past.

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Securing survival

Despite the potential for ethnic conflict in Latvia after the collapse of the USSR, inter-ethnic tensions between native Latvians and non-native Russian-speakers have remained at a remarkably low level. Andres Kahar looks at the politics of 'ethno-security' in Latvia.

For Latvians, language is a powerful defining tool of both their national identity and the nation-state. Accordingly, Latvian language policy is a key component of a broader scheme aimed at protecting the Latvians as an ethnic group.

To those who have followed Latvia's post-Soviet transformation, last autumn's implementation of a law enshrining the official status of the Latvian language was just another step in an ongoing process of ensuring Latvian security – 'ethno-security,' to be more precise.

It's no exaggeration to suggest that Latvian policymakers are obsessed with

ethnopolitical security will actually have an opposite effect.

The vast majority of these non-Latvians are Russophones. Most are Soviet-era settlers (or descendants of those settlers) who remember the Soviet years, a time when Russian was dominant. Many of them plainly resent having the Latvian language legally foisted upon a society in which only 57% of the people are ethnic Latvians. In the former Soviet system, non-natives had little incentive to learn Latvian; at the same time, most Latvians had little choice but to function in Russian.

Leaders representing Latvia's

and a source of potential instability in the wider region.

To help Latvia's non-citizens along, Western-funded state language programmes have been up and running for years. In addition, the Latvian government announced a state integration programme. However, the government has been reportedly slow to allocate serious funding to this minority policy framework.

Boris Tsilevich, a parliamentarian and political activist for Russophone rights in Latvia, articulated his beef with Latvia's ethnic policies.

'It's not that the social and economic situation of non-Latvians is horrible here,' Tsilevich explained. 'I can't really say that is the case, especially when life is better for people here than in Russia. It's really more a matter of non-Latvians being politically marginalised. In a democratic state it cannot be that way.'

For their part, many Latvians are bothered by the continued prevalence of Russian in everyday life. From their perspective, it's a reminder of how they were pushed to the brink of minority status in their own country.

Indeed, one detects an irony when walking the streets of Riga, the Latvian capital: while the street signs and much of the customer service are in Latvian, Russian is heard almost everywhere. Indeed, nearly 70 percent of Riga's population is Russian-speaking. What's more, Latvians are a minority in other big Latvian cities.

Their worries do not end there. Russia – the ex-imperial master – has time and again stated its intention to defend Russophones against the alleged 'human rights abuses' by Latvia's leadership, which is overwhelmingly Latvian.

In the years since the restoration of Latvian independence in 1991, anti-Latvian rhetoric out of Moscow has ranged from international allegations

But the debate over language policy was, of course, not only about language.

the idea of security. After a half-century of Soviet occupation – not to mention a few conquests by regional powers in earlier centuries – they come by this obsession honestly. And when Latvian policymakers talk about security, their idea of security is ultimately about the survival of the Latvian ethnic group and its culture.

Latvians 40 percent

There is a hitch, however: not everyone in Latvia is an ethnic Latvian. Many non-Latvians – groups that comprise more than 40% of the country's total population of 2.4 million – feel that plans for making

Russophones complain that policies aiming to undo the Soviet legacy have left non-natives feeling insecure and politically sidelined.

They have a point: about 570 000 people – nearly all of them non-Latvian – are non-citizens who must meet naturalisation requirements to become citizens. Basic knowledge of Latvian is a chief requirement.

While these rules are not out of step with similar laws in many other European countries, it's the context that concerns observers. With Russia – the 'kin state' – to Latvia's east, the reality of such a large number of stateless Russian-speakers is easily politicised

of discrimination against Baltic Russians to intimations of economic sanctions and military intervention.

Russia still officially views Latvia and its Baltic neighbours (Estonia and Lithuania) as part of its so-called 'Near Abroad.'

This might not be so disturbing for native Balts if it weren't for Moscow's hard-line opposition to Baltic membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Russian opposition is commonly recognised as a main reason behind Baltic exclusion from the first round of NATO expansion in 1999.

Baltic ethnopolitics

The latest act in Latvia's ethno-security drama was written last September, when new Latvian language regulations entered into force. The law, which was originally passed in December 1999, sets the terms for the use of Latvian in the public service and numerous professions, including some in the private sector.

The reactions to the language law illustrate how Latvian ethnopolitics tend to play out domestically and in the wider region.

The law – which, like the original 1989 legislation (passed under the auspices of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*), enshrines the status of the Latvian language – immediately aroused fear among many Russian-speakers.

Many of Latvia's Russian-speakers worried about the new law's institution of six categories of Latvian language competence in the place of the previous three. Although the fear turned out to be misplaced, many were initially concerned that authorities would call for mass re-testing and re-certification.

Activists representing the Russo-phone population came out against rules requiring that all documents submitted to public offices be written in Latvian. Critics also resented legal demands for the Latvianisation of names. (For example, a name like 'John Smith' would become 'Dzons Smits.')

But the debate over language policy was, of course, not only about language.

In effect, language requirements are a policy mechanism for regulating the rate of naturalisation. And naturalisation rules – which have limited the number of non-natives who are able to vote or run for public office – were the means by which ethnic Latvian leaders consolidated their control of Latvia's political space.

For several years, a core of pro-Russophone activists has railed against Latvian efforts to consolidate ethnic control over the state. Their anxieties peaked after the summer of 1997, when Latvian politicians began debating a new and more definitive language law.

Last September, when the new regulations finally kicked in, small groups of dissenters took to the streets. The banner held up at one demonstration spelled out a chilling warning: 'Linguistic Dictatorship Leads to Kosovo,' it said.

Besides, the language law received a stamp of approval from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a human rights watchdog body that had run previous checks on Latvian language and citizenship laws. This meant that the most serious diplomatic roadblock to the law's implementation was cleared. (See http://www.osce.org/press_rel/2000/08/982-hcnm.html)

Dzintars Abikis, one of law's drafters, looked on the anti-language law protests in a sinister light: 'Whether they [the left-wing coalition] intend to or not, they are serving Moscow's agenda.'

Suspicious clearly ran deep on both sides. Such is the backdrop of ethnic politics in Latvia.

Yet, despite the apparent potential for a serious clash, no crisis occurred. As with previous disputes over ethnic policies, the stand-off remained non-violent and tensions quickly cooled.

For analysts of ex-Soviet regions, the Latvian scenario serves up a unique

These conflicts of political will and ethnopolitical reality have had bloody consequences.

Days after the new law became official, a left-wing Saeima (parliament) coalition called For Human Rights in a United Latvia (FHRUL) issued a resolution calling for 'non-violent resistance' to the new regulations. Proposed methods of resistance included the boycott of non-Russian companies and non-Russian media.

These left-wing politicians claimed that the state's single-language policy contradicted international treaties on minority rights. FHRUL leaders criticised the government for not supporting education in minority languages. The government was also accused of failing to deal with parties and NGOs that represent minorities.

Latvian leaders were unimpressed by these arguments. They stuck to their plan.

The puzzle for outside observers is figuring out how inter-ethnic tensions were kept down to such a low level. Given the incidence of failed states and inter-ethnic warfare in many regions around the world – including parts of the former Soviet Union – how do we explain this Baltic exception?

Like Latvia, all other ex-Soviet republics (except Russia) have formally declared themselves 'national states.' But, strictly speaking, such declarations were misleading, for none of the ex-Soviet states are ethnically homogeneous.

These conflicts of political will and ethnopolitical reality have had bloody consequences: intra-state tensions and numerous conflicts between national majorities and ethnic minorities.



A Russian demonstrator in Riga, Latvia, singing a Soviet war song. There are some 25 million Russians living in ex-Soviet countries. Photo: Pressens Bild

Moscow's oft-declared aim to protect the rights of the some 25 million Russians still living in ex-Soviet countries seemed to guarantee that some of these conflicts would spill over state borders.

For example, in the immediate post-Soviet period, efforts by ethnic elites in Georgia and Moldova to nationalize

establish ethnic control over the Latvian state via language, citizenship and education policies were for the most part successful. Although Russian opposition and Western diplomacy have prompted Latvian leaders to moderate policies at key points, native elites successfully fostered the Latvian national identity as the identity of the

European Union (EU) membership has been a 'Holy Grail' of Latvian foreign policy.

their states led to inter-ethnic war and Russian intervention. In Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, Moscow's lingering influence has led to the institution of Russian as an official language. And last summer, language disputes between Ukrainians and local Russians led to a heated dispute between Kyiv and Moscow – an imbroglio that was only cooled by OSCE diplomacy. Somehow, Latvia was different.

The plans of Latvian leaders to re-

Latvian state. Moreover, legislated bilingualism à la Belarus and Kyrgyzstan is viewed by Latvians as anathema to the notion of independent nationhood.

Remarkably, ethnopolitical differences have not escalated beyond legislative wrangles or diplomatic spats. To the relief of Latvia's residents and Western European neighbours, nationalist violence and the state collapse have not been factors in the Baltic equation.

But, then again, Latvian policymakers (as well as their Baltic counterparts) had two other factors working in their favour. These factors have been absent in other ex-Soviet states.

First, there was the notion of legal restoration. Most Western states never recognised the Soviet occupation of the Baltics in 1940, thereby legitimising Latvian national claims over their state as a restoration of the pre-war republic.

This also allowed Latvian lawmakers to deem Soviet-era settlers 'illegal migrants' who moved to Latvia during an illegal occupation. Lawmakers then set the terms for the naturalisation of non-citizens to citizenship, establishing basic knowledge of Latvian as a main prerequisite.

Secondly, Latvia's extensive integration into Western structures has given Western leaders leverage over the process of defining and making security in Latvia. European Union (EU) membership has been a 'Holy Grail' of Latvian foreign policy. Since Latvian leaders are currently in negotiations with Brussels for EU membership later this decade, EU norms and structures have subtly modified the ways in which policymakers in Riga define their political space and security aims.

This has put Western diplomats – particularly those representing the EU and the OSCE – in a position to exert normative pressure on Latvian politicians. In recent years, they have urged Latvia to moderate citizenship and language policies in order to defuse Russo-Baltic tensions and prevent regional crises.

Over time, this steady stream of Western policy guidance has altered the way many Latvian policymakers set about doing ethno-security. Even so, Western diplomats have been constrained, in part by the time-honoured principle of state sovereignty. This has meant that Western diplomats could only exert serious pressure on Riga at times of potential crisis, and even then in the teeth of resistance by Latvian nationalists.

During last autumn's language

debate, Janis Jurkans, chairman of the left-wing coalition FHRUL, identified the concept of restorationism as key to explaining Latvians' success at regaining ethnic control. According to Jurkans, a former Latvian foreign minister, the legal nature of this concept disguises the ethnopolitical principle being put into effect.

'Portraying the Latvianisation of Latvia as a legal process based on historical and international justice makes it seem less like setting advantages for a single ethnic group and more like a natural procedure,' Jurkans explained. 'That hides the discriminatory part of the policies. People accept it as the natural way of things.'

To this Jurkans added: 'Many of our politicians want to live in a Latvia for Latvians, but this is not our fate [...] Latvia is a multiethnic country. It's unproductive to talk in a way that alienates large numbers of people.'

Using Western leverage

Many Western policymakers – especially those from nearby EU countries – have been inclined to agree with Jurkans. But as state sovereignty remains a guiding principle of interstate relations, Western leaders found themselves obliged to stand by the Cold War policy of non-recognition. That gave Latvian leaders political room to restore a state in their own ethnic image.

Moreover, in the immediate period following the Soviet collapse, there was a worry that too much Western pressure on Latvian leaders to change policy tack could offer Moscow a pretext for a more heavy-handed Baltic policy. There was good reason for caution: Russian (ex-Soviet) army personnel remained stationed in the Baltics until August 1994.

By the mid-1990s, however, a more coherent Western policy vis-à-vis Latvian ethnopolitics was taking shape.

By that point, an OSCE mission was well established in Riga to act as an advance guard for the Organisation's preventive diplomacy mandate. Latvia's

application for EU membership (in 1995) also afforded European leaders more influence in their dealings with Latvian counterparts.

The OSCE has arguably been the most important Western body working in the realm of Latvian ethno-security policy. To be sure, the diplomatic role played by the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Max van der Stoel, has been justly credited with keeping ethnopolitical disputes between Latvians and non-Latvians tractable.

In 1999, van der Stoel was instrumental in making certain that the language law dispute didn't spill over into regional controversy. It was at the HCNM's urging that touchy articles in the law – proposed rules dealing with the use of Latvian at public events

the crux of the issue: the discrimination of a minority.

'The OSCE is often accused of working against this side or working against that side,' explained Falk Lange, the ex-deputy head of the OSCE mission in Riga. ' [...] But since we often end up criticised by both sides, I figure we must be doing something right.'

Lange was right. The OSCE has endured its share of criticism, and some of it quite vocal. During a 1999 visit to Riga, van der Stoel was met by an angry group of Latvian protesters hoisting placards. One of the messages read: 'Van der Stoel—Latvia's gravedigger!'

Van der Stoel and the OSCE were not alone in conveying Western messages to Latvian lawmakers, however.

The OSCE has endured its share of criticism, and some of it quite vocal.

and on public signs – were dropped.

Van der Stoel voiced the concern that Latvian authorities would be overstepping the democratic mark by regulating language use in the private sector. Back then, identified points of concern included a ban on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) displaying signs in any language other than Latvian – another touchy point that was invalidated last year.

Recognising that the language policy issue was ethnically charged, the HCNM was rather tactful in tailoring his arguments. At pains to avoid coming off as pro-Russian in his position – something that a number of nationalist Latvian politicians already suspected – van der Stoel framed his arguments in terms of risk to foreign investment. He warned Latvian lawmakers that regulating Latvian use in the private sphere could scare off Western investors. At the same time, this reluctance to appear pro-Russian caused some Russian-speaking activists to accuse the OSCE of avoiding what they saw as

In the summer of 1999, EU leaders were also addressing the Latvian language issue. Finnish Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen travelled to Riga and echoed the OSCE's call for caution.

Halonen's message held sway. After all, Finland was holding the rotating presidency of the EU. The top Finnish diplomat's advice was a clear signal from Brussels that Latvian lawmakers should loosen regulations and dodge the snare of a regional dispute, no less one potentially involving Russia.

Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga vetoed the controversial version of the law in July 1999. The legislation was modified for passage by the end of the year – just in time for an invite to EU membership negotiations.

Indeed, the carrot of EU membership has often been decisive in convincing pragmatic Latvian politicians of the need for a more moderate stance. Furthermore, this strategy of OSCE caveats being followed by a firm EU nod has become a familiar routine.

To observers at a distance, this Latvian strategy was surprising.

As High Commissioner Max van der Stoep is in the business of invoking norms that are not necessarily enforceable internationally, his Baltic agenda is certainly bolstered by support from a major policy actor such as the EU.

Time and again, Brussels has strengthened the HCNM's arguments by exerting influence on Latvian politicians to accept OSCE recommendations or by putting up the funds needed for the implementation of an OSCE proposal. EU funding for Latvian language training is a good example of such practical support.

In the summer of 1999, Latvia came under Western pressure to amend its language law. Latvian leaders realised that the state was under review by the European Commission for its readiness to begin membership negotiations. As one former Latvian Foreign Ministry adviser put it: 'The benefits of being in Europe's good books obviously outweighed the costs of sticking to our original position.'

The EU's leverage in Latvia was a factor again in 2000, as Latvia's EU membership negotiations were getting underway. Last November, the European Commission returned to the

subject of Latvian language legislation in its regular report on Latvia's progress in accession towards EU membership (see http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/dwn/report_11_00/pdf/en/lv_en.pdf).

While Brussels confirms that the language law is in line with the EU's European Agreement, the November 2000 report includes a warning about regulating language use in the private sector. Referring to the hazy wording of some legal provisions, the European Commission admonishes Latvian authorities to only enforce the language law in cases of 'legitimate public interest.' And when Europe speaks, Latvian leaders sit up and take notice.

'If we want to join Europe, we have to accept the fact that what we do in



Helsinki, December 1999. The EU summit brought good news for Turkey, granted candidate status, and six additional countries, among them Latvia advancing to membership negotiations. Photo: Pressens Bild

Latvia can have effects in the larger region,' said Andrejs Pantelejevs, a leading MP of the centrist Latvia's Way party. 'Mr van der Stoel and the OSCE mission have sent us this message for many years now.

'Yes, of course there is the question of national sovereignty, and that upsets many in the Saeima [parliament]. But if we pass laws which lead to social conflict, then the state becomes threatened and we become a liability for Europe.'

Conflicting policy views

Not all Latvian politicians view ethno-security issues in a more regional context like Pantelejevs. Many lawmakers and constituents – especially those of a nationalist bent – tend to resent international political bodies for what they see as interference in domestic affairs.

In the debate leading to the final language law, a top concern of both local human rights activists and Western observers was the legislation of Latvian in the private sphere. Even under the current law, some private sector employees will be governed by the legislation's language competency requirements.

To observers at a distance, this Latvian strategy was surprising. After all, this is a country where free market principles are often gospel, having guided many successful economic reforms. It almost seemed odd that drafters of the language law were discarding the very market notion of free choice that had been bandied

be possible without translators. At worst, business would be very slow.'

That is the issue with ethno-security, however: different rules apply.

British-Latvian Juris Sinka, an MP from the nationalist party For Fatherland and Freedom, argues in terms of the right of Latvians to make their own rules unfettered by external politics. Last September, he defended the new legislation.

'What's wrong with the law? I think

suggested by the sloganeering, podium-pounding and journalistic flurry of politics.

To be sure, the Latvian discourse about 'Europe' and international human rights regimes is the preserve of political elites and a small number of NGO leaders and activists. These are the people who conceptualise security and devise policies. Yet, in everyday life, people have been clever about dealing with social realities.

Yet, in everyday life, people have been clever about dealing with social realities.

it's quite good, and even the commissar [sic] Max van der Stoel approved it,' Sinka said.

'If a vociferous minority is opposed to the Latvian position, it's not our problem. Why should an entrepreneur who runs a shop not make sure people can speak Latvian? My wife, for example, does not speak Russian but is a Latvian citizen. Is she supposed to go to Russian classes so, let's say a sanitation engineer, can understand her?'

Reality on the ground

Despite the initial sound and fury last autumn, the situation calmed quickly and normalised.

Once again, the question is how? There are two possible explanations.

First off, Latvia is a society of pragmatists. Regional diplomacy and national policy are often quite remo-

A good example of this emerged in Daugavpils, a southeastern Latvian city where nearly 90% of the residents are Russian-speakers. In such a place, strict Latvian language rules could prove problematic – especially the new regulations prohibiting private persons from filing documents, applications and complaints to public offices in any language other than Latvian.

However, municipal authorities in Daugavpils found a way around the law: they hired a translator. The same proposal was rejected in Riga, but activists are still pressing the issue.

The second possible reason the situation last autumn calmed down so quickly relates to divisions within the left-wing opposition. Although FHRUL was quick to issue its September resolution calling for 'non-violent resistance,' Latvian government watchers were perplexed to see the coalition's chairman, Janis Jurkans, distance himself from the very resolution he helped to usher in.

At the same time, the falling out within FHRUL's leadership was predictable. The coalition itself was formed in 1998 as a rather motley aggregation of left-wing factions. Some leading figures, like Jurkans, are avowedly pro-Europe and even cautiously pro-market in outlook. Others, however, like ex-Latvian Communist Party boss Alfreds Rubiks,

Regional diplomacy and national policy are often quite removed from the reality on the ground.

about in other policy debates.

As one high-level Latvian civil servant put it: 'If I have a meeting with representatives of a private firm and they all happen to be Russians, it makes no sense for us to conduct the meeting in Latvian. For one thing, it might not

ved from the reality on the ground.

And secondly, at the end of the day, the cost of social and political instability is deemed too high by those engaged in the ethno-security discourse. There is often more convergence in the centre than is



President Bill Clinton looks on as three Baltic leaders sign a charter calling for their membership in NATO. From left: Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis. Photo: Pressens Bild

come short of waxing nostalgic about the old Soviet regime.

There was another element missing in the protests last autumn: Kremlin

‘Latvia will never be completely secure as long as it remains outside of the EU.’

anger. Some of the more radical Russian-speaking activists in Latvia might have missed the thunder of Moscow’s

allegations, which have indeed been significant factors in past ethno-security debates. While leaders in Moscow were vocal last summer in stating their continued opposition to Baltic membership in NATO, they were quiet in September when the Latvian language law entered into force.

That made it easier for some Latvian politicians to ‘Europeanise’ the language issue. Janis Jurkans is one of those politicians who want to frame the ethno-security discourse in broader terms. He was forthright in

explaining his change of mind on the left-wing coalition’s protest resolution.

‘It’s politically wrong and irresponsible to incite people knowing we can’t protect them,’ he said. ‘Our job is to work on the legislation. Our job is to go to international organisations and ask them to help us bring all of our laws into compliance with EU norms and expectations.’

Europe as common ground

Janis Jurkans’s orientation towards the EU is one thing he shares in common with most other leading Latvian

politicians, on the left, centre and nationalist right.

Europe is the common policy ground where most Latvian policy-makers meet. Deepening and intertwining contacts with European organisations over the past decade – everything from the EU's PHARE programme to Nordic film festivals – have made the prospect of becoming a full-fledged 'European country' very tangible to Latvian elites. This is a major factor that has set the Baltic states apart from other ex-Soviet republics.

Thus far, the idea of Europe has been not only been a moderating influence on Latvian ethno-security policies, but it has also been a stabiliser for Latvian society. Nationalist politicians may well grumble over OSCE or EU pressure on sensitive policy issues. However, the very presence of the OSCE mission and the European Commission delegation in Riga has served as a constant reminder of Latvia's connection to a region beyond state borders.

Given how a majority Latvian policymakers rally together in the cause of EU accession, it's almost easy to forget that many of them hold divergent ideas about ethno-security.

For left-wing maverick Janis Jurkans, ethno-security can be ensured once Latvian society is more integrated. He believes that Latvian leaders would do well to ease language and naturalisation requirements for non-Latvians and accept the idea of multiculturalism.

As centrist Andrejs Pantelejevs views it, ethno-security concerns are inextricably tied to larger matters of regional stability. In his words: 'Latvia will never be completely secure as long as it remains outside of the EU. If EU membership means changing the way Latvians would maybe make decisions in a world by themselves, then there is no question. We must change.'

Even nationalists like Juris Sinka – a staunch defender of ethnic Latvians' right to dictate their own fate without external interference – expresses his hope that the OSCE mission in Latvia

is extended. As Sinka points out, monitoring by the OSCE has enabled Riga to deflect many of Moscow's searing allegations of 'ethnic cleansing' in Latvia.

Juris Sinka concedes that the OSCE has become 'a fixture of Latvian politics and policy.' To illustrate the point, he tells a story about unexpectedly

running into High Commissioner Max van der Stoep in the capital of Macedonia. At the time, Sinka was visiting in the capacity of a human rights monitor for the Council of Europe. The two had an early breakfast at a hotel in Skopje.

'It made for interesting breakfast conversation, as you might imagine' Sinka said, smiling. 'But like all good things, it came to an end. I got up and said I'll see you in Riga. You see, I could safely count on that because it seems that he is always coming to this city.'

Perhaps that's the major point about how Latvian ethno-security policy is developing: the mental maps of the policy-makers are changing. The looming significance of European organisations and structures in Latvia has redefined the choices before Latvian policymakers.

A decade ago, Soviet domination meant that the order of the day was that of ensuring the long-term survival of Latvia as an ethnic nation. The legitimating principle of politics was that of restoring the nation-state, and that established the premise for an ethno-security agenda.

Today, Latvian lawmakers are no longer mere national movement leaders; they are the elected leaders of a state that is in the midst of integration into the EU. As Andrejs Pantelejevs points out, that has often demanded a change in policy. Whenever the narrative of ensuring security for the

Latvian ethnic group clashed with the regionalist narrative of European integration – as arguably happened during the 1999 debate over Latvia's language law – Latvian leaders have been forced to reassess what is in their interest.

Even so, Juris Sinka insists that this will not translate into less emphasis on the 'Latvian' part of Latvian security.

Latvian leaders have been forced to reassess what is in their interest.

'Ask a German what's in his interest and if he feels less German,' said Sinka. 'The answer will be a definitive 'No.' Ask a Frenchman if he feels less French. The same. But are they less eager EU members?'

Sinka pauses and answers his own question. 'Of course not. The context has changed, but the goal remains. It's all about national survival, my boy!'



For further reading:

- Juris Dreifeldts, *Latvia in Transition* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996), 214pp
- David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, 1998), 448pp.
- Rasma Karklins, *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy: The Collapse of the USSR and Latvia* (The Woodrow Wilson Centre Press: Washington D.C., 1994), 206pp.

Peace under siege

Colin Chapman offers an overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the recent violence surrounding the 'Aqsa Intifada' from the vantage point of Lebanon.

The message of this spontaneous and apparently ongoing uprising which began in early October 2000 should by now be very clear. The Palestinians are saying to Israel and the world, 'Enough is enough! We're not willing to be forced any further into an impossible corner in the so-called 'peace process'. We're not prepared to

given the Israelis the justification (which some probably wanted) to slow down the implementation of its commitments to the peace process ... If only the Oslo Accord had not postponed discussion of vital issues like the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian statehood and the right of refugees to return ... If only successive Israeli

Options which might have been possible in the past are no longer viable.

tolerate the provocation and the delaying tactics of Israeli politicians or the arrogance of settlers on the West Bank any longer. The first Intifada of 1987–1993 achieved something, but its benefits have long since disappeared. The hopes that sprang from Madrid in 1991 and Oslo in 1993 have evaporated because of Israel's unwillingness to implement its promises, and our situation is going from bad to worse. If we are not to become like the North American Indians or the Australian Aborigines, this is our last chance to protest and make a stand before we are ground to nothing by the political and military machine of Israel.'

With the benefit of hindsight, of course, it's easy to wish that things might have turned out differently. If only Ehud Barak had not allowed Ariel Sharon to visit to the Temple Mount on 27 September 2000 ... If only the Palestinians demonstrators had kept to stones and not started blowing up buses and shooting at settlers ... If only Arabs had not committed acts of violence at crucial stages in recent years and thus

governments had not pursued so vigorously their policy of building settlements and roads on the West Bank ... If only Israel had complied with UN Resolutions and withdrawn from the West Bank after the 1967 occupation ... If only the Palestinians had gone ahead and created a Palestinian state in 1948 in accordance with the UN Partition Plan ... The list could go on indefinitely, and all it shows is that options which might have been possible in the past are no longer viable. We can't put the clock back or unscramble the egg, and we have to deal with the situation as it is now – not as it might have been.

Living in Lebanon at the present time I see a country that has rejoiced over the Israeli withdrawal from the south in May 2000, but because of the breakdown of the peace process and the absence of economic and political confidence in the region, is virtually crippled in its efforts to rebuild itself after years of civil war. I find myself remembering what it was like to live through part of the civil war in

Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s and how I used to try to explain to friends at home in Britain what the civil war was all about: 'Imagine that you're playing chess with another person. Then while you're playing, you gradually realise that the board on which you're playing is part of a much larger board on which many other people are playing against each other. Since there are several different games being played out at the same time on the board in front of you, you have very little control of your own pieces. They're constantly being moved by other people to further their own game plan, and no one can have an overall view of how the whole chaotic process is working out.' It was the multiplicity of the parties, factions, issues and interests which was so hard to explain.

Dare one say that in comparison with the Lebanese civil war the basic issue in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is relatively simple? What complicates the issue and makes it so much harder to resolve is the inequalities in the power equation and a number of psychological processes which affect individuals, communities and nations. Working through these stages suggests that the options for resolving the conflict are becoming clearer by the day.

Nationalisms & ideologies clash

Everyone knows about the origins of Zionism in the dream of a return of Jews to the land and the establishment of a homeland/state (Herzl's 'The Jews' State' *der Judenstaat*, 1896). Not so many are aware that Palestinians had some sense of their distinct identity in the 19th century and that Palestinian nationalism had its roots in the Arab Awakening which began in the 1840s. One of the ironies of the conflict that has developed since then is that Jewish nationalism, with its vision of a strong



Since the Oslo agreement, the Palestinian Authority has been in the impossible position of policing its own angry and embittered communities. Photo: Nasser Isstayeh/Pressens Bild

Jewish presence in the land, has inevitably stimulated the development of Palestinian Arab nationalism.

When Jews were looking for a homeland as a refuge from European anti-Semitism from 1880 onwards, Palestine was the only piece of land they saw as worthy of consideration, because of their connection with it in the past. They therefore based their claim on previous occupation of the land at the time of the patriarchs (between the 20th and 18th centuries BC), the conquest under Joshua (probably 13th century), the kingdom established by David and Solomon (10th and 9th centuries) which continued for around 450 years until 586BC, and a continuing presence in an attenuated form until the destruction of Jerusalem in 132 AD and in a

number of small, scattered Jewish communities until the time of the new immigration from Europe at the end of the 19th Century. Zionist leaders like Theodore Herzl gained the support of Western governments by explaining

Jewish subjects into second-class citizens. The reluctance of the present Israeli government to concede sovereignty over East Jerusalem to the Palestinians underlines their strong emotional and religious attachment to

Christian Palestinians express their attachment to Jerusalem and to the land with as much intensity as Muslims.

the advantages they could gain from having a sympathetic Jewish presence placed so strategically in the Middle East.

The ideology of Zionism came to develop the concept of a nation state based on both race and religion. This 'Jewish state' inevitably turns its non-

Jerusalem as the site of the ancient temple. Ideological and religious convictions of this kind appear to observers to be just as intractable as similar convictions expressed by the other side.

The Palestinian Arabs base their claim on their continuous presence in

the land for the last 1400 years or more. While they recognise that they are very mixed racially, and that they have never enjoyed independence since they have always been part of larger empires (Arab, Egyptian, Ottoman, and then the British Mandate), their main language has been Arabic and their culture Arab throughout these centuries. Many can trace their families back for generations and know the names of the towns and villages in which they lived.

This claim based on the continuity of occupation for centuries is undergirded – at least for Muslims, who amount to 21 percent of the population of Israel and 98 percent of the

The following six witnesses – American, Arab, Jewish and Christian – writing at various stages between 1841 and 1968 all bear witness to the same basic perception that the clash between these two nationalisms with their related ideologies was bound to lead to conflict, which in turn would lead to displacement.

David Millard, an American Christian preacher, writing after a visit to Palestine in 1841:

‘Should the time ever take place when the Jews shall again possess the land of their fathers, a very important overturn must first take

ravage and lay waste the whole land. In that case, the Jews could not protect themselves, and must fall a prey to the tribes of Ishmael. Nor could a standing army, kept by the powers of Europe, protect them.’

Najib Azuri, a Palestinian Arab, writing in 1905:

‘Two important phenomena of the same nature and yet in direct conflict, which have so far escaped all attention, are at present developing in the Asiatic part of Turkey. They are the awakening of the Arab nation and the hidden attempts of Jews to re-establish the ancient kingdom of Israel on a very large scale. These two movements are destined to be in permanent conflict, until one gains the upper hand over the other. The fate of the whole world will depend on the eventual outcome of the conflict between these two peoples who represent two conflicting principles.’

Theodore Hertzl, writing in his diaries around 1898:

‘We shall have to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country ... Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.’

Asher Ginsberg (Ahad Ha’am, a Jew, writing in 1911:

‘It was evident twenty years ago (i.e. in 1891) that the day would come when the Arabs would stand up against us.’

Moshe Dayan, writing in 1968:

‘We are doomed to live in a constant state of war with the Arabs and there is no escape from sacrifice and bloodshed. This is perhaps an undesirable situation, but it is a fact. If we are to proceed with our work

There has always been a significant number of Jews who genuinely wanted and worked for peaceful co-existence with the Arabs.

Palestinian population – by an appeal to Islamic scripture, tradition and history. It was from Jerusalem that the Prophet Muhammad is thought to have been taken up to heaven during his ‘Night Journey’ (the *isra’* and *mi’raj*). Palestine came under Islamic rule in 636 AD, only four years after the death of the Prophet, and Jerusalem has always been regarded by Muslims as the third most holy city after Mecca and Medina.

If Islamic ideology has gained greater support in recent years, it is at least partly because the world has turned such a deaf ear to appeals based on international law, on continuous occupation and self-determination. Christian Palestinians express their attachment to Jerusalem and to the land with as much intensity as Muslims, because of all the places associated with the life of Christ and because of their commitment to the Palestinian cause. But they do not usually use arguments based on religion to claim exclusive political sovereignty over the city in the way that Jews and Muslims frequently do.

place with the nations and tribes that surround it. The land is at present inhabited by native Arabs, who till the soil and mainly people the towns and villages. The question arises, how are these inhabitants to be dispossessed of the land? Is a purchase contemplated? Who, or what power is to enforce such a purchase, and where would the present inhabitants emigrate to? Or is it contemplated that they are to be driven out by the sword?

‘This, I am convinced is the only means by which the land can be cleared of its present population. But in this case, the native inhabitants would, of course, be driven back upon Arabia, which bends like a crescent round the south and east of the Holy Land. The present inhabitants would not thus be driven out without obstinacy and bloodshed, carrying with them at the same time, the most malignant inveteracy. From Arabia, aided by other tribes, they would sally from time to time, to

against the wishes of the Arabs we shall have to expect such sacrifices.' The history of the last 130 years has shown that these two people laying claim (for different reasons) to the same piece of land would never in the long run be able to share power or live peacefully side by side. Having seen 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia and Kosovo on our television screens, we can now use this term to describe the process by which Palestinians have been displaced, by fair means or foul, at every stage in the conflict, in order to make way for Jewish settlement.

If Israel had obeyed UN Resolutions and withdrawn from the West Bank after 1967, it might have been possible eventually for some kind of Palestinian state to be created on the West Bank and Gaza. But the policy of building settlements, which has been continued, if not actually accelerated, by successive Israeli governments (including that of Ehud Barak), demonstrates that dispossession and ethnic cleansing are the most appropriate words for what has been happening. There has always been a significant number of Jews who genuinely wanted and worked for peaceful co-existence with the Arabs. Unfortunately it has generally been those with a more negative and forceful approach to the Palestinians who have won the day.

The Aqsa Intifada expresses the profound Palestinian despair over Israeli policies on the West Bank which for 33 years have attempted to make any Palestinian entity as meaningless and as impotent as possible. 'They are running rings round the Palestinians,' was the comment made to me by a British friend in Jerusalem in 1980. If we wonder how the rest of the world could allow these things to go on before their eyes for so long, the answer has to do with the realities of power.

The power equation

If some of the following analysis seems obvious and/or one-sided, it probably still needs to be stated, since it's a

viewpoint that is often suppressed and misrepresented. The following are some of the main factors which need to be taken into consideration in attempting to understand why Israel has been able to get its own way on the West Bank

surrendered their last card by accepting the existence and legitimacy of the Jewish state, Israel has held all the cards. Since Oslo the Palestinian Authority has been in the impossible position of policing its own angry and embittered

Since Oslo the Palestinian Authority has been in the impossible position of policing its own angry and embittered communities.

and in Gaza for so much of the time since 1967.

Israel has won every war it has fought – in 1948–1949, 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982 – and therefore has been able to enter the negotiations since Madrid from a position of confidence and strength. With American support, it has quietly ignored international law relating to territories occupied in war and every UN resolution following the 1967 war. When occasionally restrained by the US because of its policies on the West Bank, it has only been a matter of months before the moral, political and financial support has been resumed. Successive Israeli governments have been creating facts on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza by building settlements, creating networks of roads, controlling water supplies and encircling Jerusalem with a ring of Jewish settlements. Their declared aim has been to guarantee their own security and to provide land for new immigrants from Russia. But a further aim has evidently been to prevent any Palestinian state from coming into existence, or if it ever were to be created, to ensure that it would be little more than a Bantustan, or in the words of one Israeli, nothing more than a 'trussed chicken'.

Since the Arabs had been defeated in war at every stage, the Palestinians, represented by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), entered the peace process from Madrid and Oslo onwards from a position of extreme weakness. Ever since they

communities (with weapons supplied by the Israelis), so that every act of violence has strengthened Israel's hand and increased its unwillingness to concede independence and sovereignty to the Palestinians.

Most Israelis are able to justify the actions of their government on the grounds of security, while the Palestinians are portrayed as the terrorists who have no desire for peace. Concessions made by Arafat and his Palestinian negotiators in an attempt to reach an agreement are condemned by the more hard-line elements in their own community, because they appear to amount to a kind of surrender. The more moderate elements among the Palestinians say, 'If our backs are against the wall, what else can we do but latch on to every concession that seems to offer a gleam of hope? What room do we have for manoeuvre? What do we do if it's a choice between humiliation and/or extinction on the one hand and these meagre crumbs that are offered by Israel and the US on the other?'

American mediation

One of the most elementary rules of peace-making is that a mediator needs to be as neutral as possible. Too much sympathy for one side or the other makes it impossible to play a genuinely mediating role. When the Norwegians were able to bring Israelis and Palestinians together in the secret process which led to the Oslo Accord in 1993, it was partly because they could not be accused of self-interest or bias.



A Palestinian boy pushes his brother and buckets of drinking water in a shopping cart to his family home in the Shati refugee camp in Gaza City. Photo: Pressens Bild

Recent American administrations may well have tried to respond to Palestinian and Arab agendas for a number of reasons, one of which would have been economic self-interest which demands that they do not alienate Arab governments which control approximately 25 percent of the oil resources of the world. One cannot but admire Clinton's grasp of the details of the West

days of his administration.

At the end of the day, however, America's sympathy and support for Israel are likely to override every other consideration. Being themselves largely a nation of settlers who have driven back its original inhabitants and taken over a whole continent, it's only natural that many of them identify with the Jews who have done basically the same

honest broker. It's only Israel and the USA who can't see it.

6 million Jews in the USA have an influence that is out of all proportion to their numbers in the total population of 281 million. Through wealth, education, skill and single-mindedness they have gained positions of power in government, business and the media. It is widely recognised, for example, that no one could ever consider entering the presidential race without the votes and the financial support of substantial sections of the Jewish community. This Zionist influence has been described by Edward Said, a prominent Palestinian-American who has been professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia State University for many years, in these words:

'The role of organised Zionist

Palestinian policy has been essentially to throw our fate as a people in the lap of the United States.

Bank situation and his determination to achieve a settlement, both at the Camp David meetings and in these last

thing in Palestine. Most of the rest of the world can see that this bias disqualifies the USA from being an

groups and activities in the United States has not been sufficiently addressed during the period of the 'peace process', a neglect that I find absolutely astonishing, given that Palestinian policy has been essentially to throw our fate as a people in the lap of the United States without any strategic awareness of how US policy is in effect dominated, if not completely controlled, by a small minority of people whose views about Middle East peace are in some way more extreme than even those of the Israeli Likud ...

'... The official discourse is totally dominated by Zionism and, except for a few individual exceptions, no alternatives to it exist. Therefore all peace arrangements undertaken on the basis of an alliance with the US are alliances that confirm rather than confront Zionist power... The irony is that there exists inside the US a vast body of opinion ready to be critical of both Israel and of US foreign policy. The tragedy is that the Arabs are too weak, too divided, too disorganised and ignorant to take advantage of it...'

Arab paralysis

One result of the Aqsa Intifada is that it has created a kind of unity in the Arab world in its opposition to Israel. Even the Christian community in Lebanon are now speaking as if they feel involved in the Palestinian cause. The Arab Summit in October 2000 produced some impressive statements of resolution, but it remains to be seen whether Arab governments will find ways of working together which will actually have a significant effect on the situation. Although they provide important moral and financial support for the Palestinians, they are widely perceived to be powerless in substantially altering the balance of power in the Middle East.

Patrick Seale's biography of Hafiz al Asad explains one basic motive which determined much of his foreign policy:

his determination to keep the major Arab states working together against the schemes of Israel. The success of Israel's diplomacy over the years, however, with the active connivance of the USA, has meant that first Egypt and then Jordan were detached from the

the leaders it chooses, the policies they adopt are generally determined less by high principles than the need to obtain power and then remain in power. Ehud Barak was probably elected in 1999 because he convinced enough people that he could deliver some kind of

In this conflict perhaps more than in any other we're dealing with suffering people whose deep wounds profoundly affect their world-view.

Arab fold and made peace separately with Israel. Arab rhetoric and the use of certain television images, combined with Islamic appeals to *jihad* against the Zionist state, keep the Palestinian cause very much alive. Hizbollah has taken a major share of the credit for the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000, and has commended its example of armed resistance to the Palestinians. In spite of this, however, the Arabs do not give the impression that they are able to work together or to produce any significant change of mind on the part of the USA.

One doesn't have to be a Marxist to recognise the importance of economic factors in the Middle East. Alongside its fundamental support for Israel, the USA has carefully nurtured its relationship with Saudi Arabia ever since the first discovery of oil there in the 1920s. It therefore has to perform a delicate balancing act between its loyalty to Israel and its economic interests in the Arab world. Throughout the Gulf War in 1991 cynics all over the world were saying that one major reason why the West reacted so strongly to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was that it felt its oil supplies were being threatened, and that further Iraqi control of Middle Eastern oil would only strengthen Iraq's position in its confrontation with Israel and the West.

The vagaries of democracy

If democratic processes give a country

peace with the Palestinians. His inability to reach a settlement and his dependence on the votes of Orthodox religious groups, however, weakened his position and made him call for early elections. In the elections of Ariel Sharon on 6 February the majority of Israelis were expressing their disappointment with Barak and their desire to explore a much tougher approach to the Palestinians. Sadly the strong and vocal opposition to recent government policies that has been expressed by many Jewish individuals and organisations within Israel in recent months doesn't seem to be able to translate itself into sufficient votes to win an election.

In the US the power of the Jewish lobby ensures that, whoever is president and whichever party has the majority on Capitol Hill, American Middle Eastern policies are likely to be more in the interest of Israel than of the Arabs. So, for example, having proclaimed her earlier support for a Palestinian state and her opposition to moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Hillary Clinton has changed her tune on both these issues during her campaign for election in New York. The message seems to be, therefore, that to get yourself elected (in New York at least), you have to choose the policies which are acceptable to the majority or to the most powerful.

Christian Zionism

Around 40 million fundamentalist Christians exercise considerable influence in the USA because their interpretation of the Bible leads them to support the Zionist vision in general and the policies of Israel in particular. Prime Ministers of Israel in recent years

world-view and their reactions. These are just some of the factors which are at work beneath the surface.

The appeal to the Holocaust

The dream of a Jewish homeland had been drawing thousands of Jews to Palestine for fifty years before the Nazis

The psychology of fear

Jews have good reason to be afraid when they hear certain kinds of Arab and Islamic rhetoric, and see the violence inflicted on innocent Israeli civilians. Fear creates the siege mentality which has developed over 2000 years of persecution in various settings and convinces them that only by superior force and constant vigilance can they ensure their own survival.

Palestinians also have good reason to be afraid because of all that they have suffered at the hands of the Jews and because of the superior power in the hands of the Jews. In the words of Hanan Ashrawi, they see themselves as 'subject to the dual injustice of dispossession, dispersion and exile on the one hand, and of occupation and oppression on the other.'

What makes the conflict so difficult to resolve is that *both* parties are dominated so much by fear that they are unable to see the others as human beings. Perhaps it's only when individuals from both sides can meet each other face to face and get to know and respect each other as people that fear can be overcome. What has been achieved on a small scale by organisations like Peace Now, Seeds of Peace, Rabbis for Human Rights, Israelis against Home Demolition and Musalaha (Reconciliation) needs to be extended to both communities on a wider scale.

The psychology of abuse

It is widely recognised that a considerable proportion of adults who abuse others emotionally, physically or sexually, have themselves suffered from abuse in childhood. Does this help us to understand why the Palestinian Authority has used torture against fellow Palestinians in prison? Does it help to explain why Jewish settlers on the West Bank are so abusive towards Palestinians, and why Israeli soldiers in uniform have sometimes been so brutal and violent? This is no simple rule of thumb that explains everything. But if the psychologists tell us that the

Both parties are dominated so much by fear that they are unable to see the others as human beings.

have made no secret of their appreciation for this lobby which adds significant weight to the Zionist lobby within the community of 6 million American Jews. They have frequently received an enthusiastic welcome from Christians who come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles as a token of solidarity with the Jewish people and the state of Israel. Grace Halsell some years ago documented the influence of certain kinds of millennial thinking on the US government and especially on President Reagan. Christian magazines from time to time report that the stones for a new temple in Jerusalem have already been cut and are ready somewhere in the USA to be shipped out to Jerusalem.

Organisations like the Middle East Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding have been working hard to educate Christian opinion in the West and present a different and more accurate interpretation of what is happening on the ground. But when the instinctive gut-level sympathy for Israel among so many Christians coincides with the perceived political interests of Israel and the USA, it is bound to make a significant impact on the general thinking of the nation.

International politics are never simply about power. In this conflict perhaps more than in any other we're dealing with suffering people whose deep wounds profoundly affect their

began to carry out their 'Final Solution'. The Holocaust simply increased the numbers of those who needed to find a homeland and accelerated the process of sending refugees to settle in Palestine. Historians are still at work documenting every detail of the whole appalling story, and human rights workers have tried to bring individuals to justice. Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Holocaust Museum in Washington and films like *Shindler's List* ensure that memories of the Holocaust are kept alive in the minds of both Jews and Gentiles. When Jews in Israel are concerned about their security, it's because of their awareness that it could all happen again, since some of their neighbours really would like to see them driven into the sea.

When Jewish fears are fed in this way by the Holocaust, the Arabs want to point out that the Holocaust is being used as a kind of psychological weapon to support the Zionist cause. 'You people in the West,' they say, 'have salved your guilty conscience over your treatment of the Jews in Europe by supporting Israel. You're glad that so many Jews have left your countries to settle in Israel. But it was you Europeans who slaughtered the Jews – not us Arabs. But *we* have had to pay and are still paying the price for *your* clear conscience. *You've* dealt with *your* problem by supporting the Jews in what they have wanted to do – and *we* are the ones who have suffered in the process.'

abused can easily become the abusers, something needs to be done to help both Jews and Arabs to find the resources to help them to resist the inevitable temptation to punish others in the way that they themselves have been punished.

Future scenarios

This analysis suggests that at the end of the day there are five possible options for the future.

1. *The one-state solution* is for Israel to remain as a Jewish state and to annex the West Bank, Gaza (and the Golan Heights, if there is no peace with Syria), making them part of Israel. This of course is unthinkable for the Israelis, and was the bad dream that used to torment Golda Meir. For if Israel is to remain a democracy, all the Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza would become citizens of the Jewish state and be given a vote. But since there is a higher birth rate among the Arabs than among the Jews, before the end of the century the Arabs would outnumber the Jews and defeat them in elections. As a Palestinian priest once said to me, 'They beat us in the battle at the borders; but we will beat them in the battle in our beds!'

2. *The creation of a single secular state*, including the whole of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, would require a new kind of state altogether: a state in which race and religion would be irrelevant and Jews and Arabs would be on a level of complete equality. This solution challenges the very concept of Israel as 'a Jewish state' and is therefore as unthinkable to most Israeli Jews as the first solution.

3. *The destruction of the state of Israel by the Palestinians and Arabs*. Arabs frequently draw comparisons between the establishment of Israel and the establishment of the Crusader kingdoms in Palestine between 1099 and 1291. They tell themselves that if they are willing to take a long-term view, Israel will ultimately share the same fate as the Crusader kingdoms. There are of course very significant differences between the state of Israel and the

Crusader kingdoms, and the present balance of power in the world makes such a scenario seem impossible. The bloodbath that it would entail should make every one of us shrink from even contemplating an outcome of this kind.

4. *The crushing of the Palestinians*. The Israeli blockades of the past several months have already ruined the economy of the West Bank and Gaza. If Sharon's government suppresses the Intifada with even greater force than has been used until now, it will simply increase and intensify the anger and bitterness of the Palestinians. If journalists and TV cameras are able to convey accurately to the rest of the world what is taking place, Israel and

of any recognition of Palestinian sovereignty to have so many Jewish settlements on the West Bank and 40 percent of the Gaza Strip occupied by Jews. The Palestinians are not likely to give up their insistence on retaining East Jerusalem as their capital and establishing the right of return for at least some of its refugees. There would need to be firm guarantees for any peace agreement, perhaps based on the concept of 'mutually assured security'.

The only way that Israel can guarantee its own security is to make peace with the Arabs. And the only conceivable way to do this at the present time is for Israelis to concede to the Palestinians the right that the Jews

The only way that Israel can guarantee its own security is to make peace with the Arabs.

the US are likely to face even fiercer criticism than they have already received. If Israel lays its hands on the Islamic sites on the Temple Mount, it will bring upon itself the wrath of the whole Islamic world. Palestinians are very serious in their willingness to die for their cause. 'Are you really going to try to kill us *all*? they say to the Israelis, 'in order to take over our land?'

5. *The two-state solution* was the original proposal of the United Nations in 1947, but was rejected out of hand by the Palestinians and all the Arabs, partly because it was felt to be imposed without consultation, and partly because the division of the land was felt to be unfair. It wasn't until 1988 that the Palestinian National Congress in Algiers was willing to revise its earlier goals, accept the existence of the state of Israel and adopt the two-state solution.

The creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza would give them sovereignty over 22 percent of the land. Some, if not many, of the Israeli settlements would need to be dismantled, since it makes a mockery

fought for from the beginning, namely the right to establish their own sovereign, independent state.

If the two-state solution sounds totally idealistic and unworkable, and if it seems to demand far too many concessions on the part of Israel, it only proves the point that Israel has been allowed by the rest of the world to do far too much on the West Bank and in Gaza with impunity since 1967. Now that the only real alternative to this solution – a brutal suppression of the Intifada – is becoming a real possibility, the international community needs to find the will and the means to convince both sides that only within the framework of two separate states can some kind of peaceful co-existence become a possibility.

Churches appeal for peace

A Faithful Appeal from the Churches of Jerusalem

Reacting to the resumption of violence, the Churches of Jerusalem issued the following statement.

"They act as if my people's wounds were only scratches. 'All is well', they say, when all is not well." {Jr 6:14}

On 28 September 2000, following the provocative visit of the Israeli Opposition Likud leader to the esplanade of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem, a new Palestinian uprising burst forth in the

to such cycles of mutual disaster.

We stress that the rights of one people are also the rights of the other people. Palestinians should be able to enjoy their own full security and to protect their interests and those of their people as much as Israel should be able to enjoy its full security and to protect its interests and those of its people. Both peoples can then live peacefully side by side, each in their own sovereign state, without being a source of fear for the other. But so long as one people remains the subject of injustice, it will continue to be a constant source of fear and insecurity for its neighbour.

The Church believes that it is the right as much as duty of an occupied

security and dignity without suffering many more episodes of painful violence.

Today, from the Holy City of Jerusalem, we cry out our desire to see peace with justice, equality and security established soon between Palestinians and Israelis on this holy land that was chosen by God to reveal His wisdom to human beings. We appeal to all Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Churches world-wide as well as to all 'friends of peace' in our land, in the region and across the whole world to toil together for the establishment of a comprehensive, just and durable peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Peace in justice remains the absolute and inviolable right of both peoples of this land. Peace should not be sacrificed for political pride. After all, peace can only be the fruit of justice.

"Some trust in their war chariots and others in their horses, but we trust in the power of the Lord our God." {Ps 20:7}

WCC sends message to Jerusalem churches

'Our shared goal is peace built on the foundations of justice'

On behalf of the officers of the World Council of Churches, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser sent the following letter, dated 12 December 2000, to the patriarchs and heads of Christian communities in Jerusalem:

'Your Beatitudes, Graces and Eminences,

The Officers of the World Council of Churches, meeting on the eve of the Advent Season, have once again turned their thoughts to you and all the people of Palestine. They have asked that I write you to assure you of their

We believe that it is truly high time to put an end to such cycles of mutual disaster.

Holy Land. This incident itself, as much as the events that ensued, should have clearly signalled to both the Israeli and Palestinian leadership of the dire need to press on with their dialogue in addressing the whole process of peace and in resolving all outstanding issues - including the question of Jerusalem. Yet, Israel preferred to respond with an even larger recourse to force.

Fully conscious of our duty as religious leaders, we look with extreme pain and sadness at all the deaths, injuries and handicaps of this latest outburst. Although both peoples have been affected by the events of the past five weeks, we cannot but also note that the overwhelming majority of the victims are Palestinians. We voice our profound solidarity and deep sympathy with all of them, and offer our condolences to the families of all those - young or old - who have lost their lives or sustained injuries. We believe that it is truly high time to put an end

people to struggle against injustice in order to gain their freedom, although it also believes that non-violent means of struggle remain stronger and far more efficient. In this sense, both parties must show the necessary fortitude, both in their hearts and in their minds, to look at the core of the conflict so that the Palestinian people can gain at long last its full freedom within its own sustainable state. It is imperative now to implement the principles of international legitimacy by enforcing the binding UN Security Council resolutions. Such fortitude is a wise sign of foresight and an indispensable pre-requisite for long-lasting peace.

It remains our conviction that justice will eventually prevail and violence will inevitably cease one day. Only then can reconciliation bring both peoples together again. As such, it would be much wiser and more courageous to go directly to a dialogue that secures peace through those elements of justice,

and the World Council of Churches' constant prayers. I do so with a heavy heart, deeply conscious of your pain and suffering in these days when you mourn the deaths of so many of your children and friends; when Palestinians suffer the destruction of many more of their homes and pass once again through the valley of the shadow of violence and death. Nor can we ignore the victims on the Israeli side of the continuing conflict.

In my Christmas message I have pointed out that the World Council of Churches will soon launch the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches seeking reconciliation and peace. I also recalled the centuries-old unwritten rule that at Christmas a cease-fire be observed in all situations of military conflict. Here I had particularly in mind our sisters and brothers caught up in the new spiral of violence in Israel and Palestine.

Desirable as it would be, a cease-fire is clearly not enough. Our shared goal must be true peace, a peace built on the foundations of justice. Together with you, therefore, we long for justice for the Palestinian people. Just peace and an end to the vicious cycle of violence is more than an urgent political necessity. It confronts us with the call to repentance and a change of heart, the readiness to recognize the God-given dignity and the rights of the other. It was surely this transformation that the Prophet had in mind when he foretold the coming of the Prince of Peace.

In these days Christians around the world prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ child, confessing anew our faith in God who humbled himself and took on human flesh in order that we might be reconciled to God and with one another. Many will draw hope once again from the song of the Virgin Mary, praising God who 'has regarded the lowly estate of his handmaiden', and saying,

*his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.*



Via Dolorosa, the winding cobblestone path that tradition says Jesus took to his crucifixion, in the old city of Jerusalem. Photo: Francois Guillot/Pressens Bild

*He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the
imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from
their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good
things, and the rich he has sent empty
away.*

the present circumstances have rendered virtually impossible such pilgrimages and even those of Christians in Palestine itself.

Nevertheless, the bonds of faith and love cannot be broken by violence and war. You are not alone in this tragic time. We and other Christians around the world will be making a pilgrimage of the heart to the manger, surrounding

Our shared goal must be true peace, a peace built on the foundations of justice.

For two millennia Christians have turned at this time of year to the Holy Place of the manger, Bethlehem, to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Many have longed once to make the pilgrimage to the manger, there to kneel down before the birthplace of the Christ child. This year especially, millions anticipated making this journey, and you have gone to great lengths to prepare hospitality for them. Tragically,

and sustaining you now and always in prayer.

May the hope that abounds in this time of preparations for the Holy Feast of Christmas give birth to a new day of peace and joy and prosperity for you and all who live in the land which has been forever blessed by the coming of Christ.'

Right of return confusions

Jerome M. Segal dissects the issues of refugee return and addresses the many disputes of resettlement policies.

Recently, some of the best minds on the Israeli left issued, in the Israeli press, a letter to the Palestinian leadership. After noting that they have struggled for over thirty years for the two state solution, the signers forcefully stated that they should never be able to agree to the return of the refugees to within the borders of Israel. Instead they affirmed that 'the refugees will have the right to return to their homeland, Palestine, and settle there.' For the best minds, this was not their best thinking.

By introducing 'the right to return to their homeland, Palestine' the sign-

are not seeking the return of millions of refugees to Israel. This they understand and is quite impossible. They are seeking a choice-based approach which will provide the refugees with a variety of structured options, of incentives and disincentives, such that only a few will actually choose to return to Israel.

The problem with the statement is that it represents the Palestinians as seeking to overwhelm Israel with refugees. As such they are portrayed as seeking Israel's destruction. This portrayal can serve only as the basis for concluding that the Palestinians have no real interest in a negotiated solution, and that diplomacy has exhausted its potential. But if diplomacy has exhausted its potential, then what need is there for electing a Prime Minister committed to the peace process? The stage is set for a military response, most likely under the leadership of Ariel Sharon.

Distinguishing Palestinian objectives

Palestinians have sought some and all of the following objectives:

1. That Israel would accept responsibility for the refugee problem.
2. That Israel would recognize 'in principle' a right of return for Palestinian refugees.
3. That Israel would accept Resolution 194.
4. That returning to Israel would be one of the options available to refugees.

It is no easy task to simply understand what each of these formulations means. Each is subject to multiple interpretations. All of them can be distinguished from actual outcomes (e.g. that 100,000 Palestinians will return, that 1 million Palestinians will return). What is truly striking about the gaps between the two sides in the negotiations is that they are about conceptualization rather than outcomes. The Israeli government is prepared, as an outcome, to allow certain numbers of refugees to return, but it wants them to be returning not by right, but as a matter of Israeli humanitarian policy.

In this the negotiations over the refugees are quite different than those over Jerusalem or territorial withdrawal. In those areas Israel was pressured to make major compromises over outcomes. For instance, to agree that it would withdraw from 95 percent of the West Bank rather than 75 percent; to agree that Palestinians would gain sovereignty over neighborhoods within Jerusalem not just over Abu Dis. And on these tangible matters, the Barak government made major concessions. Yet when it comes to refugees, where the Palestinians are not pushing for the return of 500 000,

Some think this an impossible effort to square the circle, but that view is quite mistaken.

ers appear to be rejecting the key Palestinian demand for recognition of their right to return to their homes in Israel. In doing this they reinforce the Barak government in its conflation of two quite different matters: the Palestinian right to return and the actual return of the Palestinians. Rather than merging these two, it is important to sharpen an awareness of the distinction.

Unfortunately, by addressing their message to the Palestinian leadership, the signers of the statement have perpetuated a dangerous misunderstanding of the deadlock in the negotiations. The Palestinian leadership seeks some formal recognition of Palestinian rights. They

Rather than trying to get the Palestinians to embrace a 'right to return to their homeland, Palestine' the yet-to-be-completed task of negotiations needs to be identified: finding a way to accommodate a Palestinian right of return to Israel, while avoiding any actual return that threatens Israel's Jewish character. This is a complex and subtle task, yet it is the future of the peace process, a major uncompleted task that requires further time and thought - a continued peace process. Some think this an impossible effort to square the circle, but that view is quite mistaken.

1 million or 2 million – on this issue there is a log jam.

Focusing on issues

One would have thought that Israel could afford to be gracious in its victory. Possibly it is not, because it takes that victory totally for granted. Yet it is worth remembering that under the Partition Resolution of 181 the Jewish state that was created in 1948 was itself almost 50 percent Palestinian. As a result of the 1948 War Israel gained control over much of the intended Palestinian state, which was 100 percent Palestinian. Thus pre-1967 Israel consisted of a territory that up until 1948 had a clear Palestinian majority. In other words, had the refugee exodus never occurred, pre-67 Israel could never have existed as a Jewish state. Even with the vast immigration of Jews to Israel over the last 50 years, if there had been no refugee exodus, Israel today would be 50 percent Palestinian. The fact that it is possible to end the conflict, hold onto lands captured during the 1948 war, retain Jewish Jerusalem and yet prevent 95 percent of the refugees from ever returning is a tremendous victory for Israel, and it should be prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to give the Palestinian whatever conceptualization makes their defeat most bearable. Focusing on each of the Palestinian issues of conceptualization, there is much that Israel can indeed provide.

Responsibility: Here a distinction needs to be made between overall responsibility for the creation of refugees, and responsibility for specific acts that caused specific populations to become refugees. With respect to the latter, there is no doubt that during the 1948 war there were instances, perhaps numerous instances, in which Palestinian villages were forcibly evacuated without justification. This is well known to historians and to some extent is already part of Israel's high school curriculum. There is no reason to deny this in the negotiations. Indeed, Israel's ability to carry out the difficult



A Palestinian woman at the Lebanese border side, cries as she tries to reach her relatives. Will she ever be able to join them? Photo: Hussein Malla/Pressens Bild

processes of peace building that will follow any successful negotiations will be enhanced by fuller awareness of the tragedy that befell the Palestinians. If the Palestinians want to see a Truth Commission emerge from the negotiations, so as to finally bring to light their individual experiences, Israel should agree.

The question of overall responsibility for the refugee problem

lation would have become refugees, if they survived at all. As important as these issues of moral responsibility are, many have feared to deal honestly with them because it is thought that they are directly relevant to the right of return. This however is a confusion. The issues are quite distinct. Whatever right of return Palestinian refugees have, it does not rest upon showing that they were forcibly evacuated. A refugee who

**If there had been no refugee exodus,
Israel today would be 50 percent
Palestinian.**

is quite a different matter. Here Israelis can reasonably maintain that there would have been no refugee problem at all if the Arab world had accepted Partition, if war had not been launched against the newly created Israel, or if their had not been broad Palestinian support for such efforts. Moreover, it is a reasonable surmise that had Israel lost the 1948 war the entire Jewish popu-

leaves a war zone out of fear or mere prudence, has a generally recognized right to return once the hostilities have ceased. The issue of responsibility for his exodus has nothing to do with it.

A right of return for Palestinian refugees: Here it is useful to distinguish between recognizing a right that pre-exists and shapes the negotiations as opposed to rights established as a result

Rather, the issue is whether they have a right to return to the areas from which they came.

of the negotiations. With respect to the latter, this is a quite reasonable goal. Israel should emphasize that the negotiations will result in the refugees having specific mutually agreed upon rights. The contested issue, of course, is what rights should refugees have as a result of the negotiations, but the idea that the negotiations might establish certain rights for the refugees or classes of them, makes eminent sense.

A pre-existing right of return is a distinct and different matter. What rights do refugees carry with them into the negotiations? The Palestinian position is that all of the refugees (and their descendants) possess a right to return to their homes within current day Israel.

Disposing other issues

The first matter to dispose of is the issue of homes – in most cases the homes no longer exist. They were bulldozed as part of a systematic effort to wipe evacuated Palestinian villages from the map. Palestinian researchers have identified over 400 such villages. In other instances, homes exist but have been occupied for fifty years by Israelis, often by those who have bought them from other Israelis who sold them under titles legitimized in Israeli eyes by Israeli law. While Palestinians have legitimate claims for compensation for their homes, it is hardly worth pursuing whether they have a right to return to them. Rather, the issue is whether they have a right to return to the areas from which they came, or perhaps more generally a right to live anywhere in Israel, and even a right to become Israeli citizens.

Part of the difficulty of sorting through such issues emerges from confusion about ‘rights talk.’ An example might help. It makes perfect sense to say to a group of people: ‘Each of you

has a right to do X’ and at the same time insist that it is legitimate to regulate and limit the exercise or implementation of those very same rights. For instance, consider a ferryboat with the capacity to carry two hundred people on its once a day route. The company sells 1 000 annual passes giving holders the right to use the boat whenever they please. As a rule no more than 50 passholders show up on any given day. Once day all 1 000 passholders show up. Each has a right to use the ferry, yet it is quite appropriate to enforce the rule that says no more than 200 are allowed at a time. To insist on the legitimacy of rules for the collective exercise of individual rights does not imply any denial of the existence of those rights for each individual. Indeed, it is hard to imagine any rights of individuals which under some circumstances would not be subject to appropriate restriction.

When considering governments with responsibility for protecting the common good, one can speak of the legitimacy of rules of implementation. When considering the bearer of the rights, one speaks of limitations of the right itself. Thus, one might say, ‘Yes, you have a right to take the ferry, but that doesn’t give you the right to board if it is already at full capacity. You have to wait even if it is a long wait, even if it means missing your only opportunity. Of course, if you don’t go you get compensation.’

There are no perfect analogies, but conceptualizing the issue in this way,

Israelis can reasonably say to Palestinian refugees, ‘Yes, we recognize a right of return, but it is not an absolute right. It is conditioned by our rights as well, our right to self-determination. Because Israel has a right to exist as a Jewish state, and because your population has grown so massively, we insist on the legitimacy of a framework for regulating the exercise of rights of refugees to return.’ Saying this to the Palestinians does not constitute a great concession. Such rights are universally recognized for all refugees. Yet this allows Israel to accept a right of return ‘in principle.’

Israelis may further say to the Palestinians, ‘You have repeatedly embraced United Nations resolutions as constituting the basis in international law for the rights of Palestinians, yet the Partition Resolution of 1947 (UNGA Res. 181) explicitly called for the creation of two states, ‘one Arab and one Jewish.’ This means that Israel has a right under international law to choose to remain a Jewish state.’ Israel can offer mutuality: it will recognize a Palestinian right of return, provided that the Palestinians recognize Israeli

Yet the Partition Resolution of 1947 (UNGA Res. 181) explicitly called for the creation of two states, ‘one Arab and one Jewish.’

rights which legitimize regulation of the implementation of return.

Could Palestinians accept this? Could they accept that international law provides a basis for regulating the implementation of the right of return? It is a possibility that needs further exploration. Here is an interesting fact. In 1988, meeting in Algiers, the PLO issued the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, one of the foundational documents of Palestinian nationalism. Within this declaration they for the first time recognized Resolution 181 as an element of international law. Indeed, it is cited as a basis in international law

for establishing, without Israeli permission, a Palestinian state. Most strikingly, within their Declaration of Independence, the Palestinians explicitly characterized Resolution 181 as having called for 'two states, one Arab and one Jewish.' Implicitly this was an acceptance of the fact that Israel's Jewishness is enshrined in international law. Thus it is quite possible that the Palestinians could enter into a mutual exchange of rights-recognition. Israel would recognize a right of return, and Palestinians would recognize that Israel has a right to choose to remain a Jewish state, and thus a right to regulate the implementation of the right of return.

Regardless of whether or not the Palestinians go this far, this is the position that Israel should affirm: that because Israel has a right to choose to remain a Jewish state, until such time as it decides otherwise, it has a right to regulate the implementation of the right of return. Retaining Israel as a Jewish state should not, however, be used as a hammer to deny Palestinian rights, but rather to structure a principled position with respect to how to approach and understand Palestinian rights.

Resolution 194

Israeli negotiators have refused to accede to Palestinian demands that they recognize the legitimacy of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, enacted in 1948. For the Palestinians, acceptance of 194 appears fundamental to settling the refugee problem. Here too, Israeli negotiators should be flexible.

The key sentence in Resolution 194 reads: 'the refugees wishing to live at peace with their neighbors should be allowed to return to their homes at the earliest practicable date.' Several points are worth noting:

-The resolution does not use 'rights language' – saying only that the refugees should be allowed to return to their homes. It neither affirms nor denies that this is a matter of right.

- The resolution when enacted referred to the 1948 refugees. While international law recognizes the rights of descendants as well, the issue of practicability, cited in the resolution, is considerably transformed by the vast growth of the refugee population. The existing 1948 refugees constitute perhaps 10 percent of today's refugee population.

-The resolution carries within itself a critical condition. It speaks of refugees 'wishing to live at peace with their neighbors.' Thus Resolution 194 does not support a totally unconditional return. Implicit here is the notion that in order to return, the refugee must be

willing to live at peace. Interpreting such a condition is not a simple matter. From an Israeli point of view this does not mean a desire for peace in the abstract. It means a commitment to lawfulness under very uncertain conditions in the future, conditions that could even include war between Israel and one or more Arab states including the future State of Palestine.

Given the very deep fissure that exists between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens and has been made clear in recent months, no one can guarantee how large numbers of returning Palestinian refugees would act in a crisis. The 'wishing to live at peace' condition



A Palestinian youth aims his slingshot at Israeli army jeeps on the outskirts of Hebron. Even at the height of tension and clashes, the options of returning refugees are several. Photo: Hossam Abu Alan/Pressens Bild

in 194 suggests that an individual-by-individual determination needs to be made. Yet this is hardly possible. While some particularly militant refugees might be excluded for obvious security reasons, there is no way of knowing about the future behavior of most refugees in unpredictable trying circumstances.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that

Indeed, as suggested above, such options can themselves be viewed as a right to choose from a particular menu – a right that will be constituted by the negotiated agreement itself.

The key question is: What return options can Israel live with? Here the leftists who announced that they would never agree to the return of Palestinian refugees (except for limited numbers

decline in the number of Palestinians who will be under Israeli sovereignty if Jerusalem is divided). The problem here however, is that a fixed cap seems to fly in the face of saying giving all refugees some option of returning.

As an alternative to any total cap, it is possible to say that the rate of returning refugees must be such as to not alter the character of Israel as a Jewish state. The rate could be a negotiated formula. Israelis might suggest that it be limited to a certain percentage of the annual immigration under the Law of Return for Jews. Thus, if in the previous year 50,000 Jews immigrated under the Law of Return, then 1/5 of that number, (10,000) Palestinians might be allowed to return in the following year, thus keeping the immigration pool to the same population ratio as found in the general population.

The existence of a regulated rate of return means that if more Palestinians seek to return than this number allows, they have to wait in a queue. The more who seek to return, the longer the queue and thus the longer the wait. This in turn means that choosing the option of returning to Israel becomes less and less attractive compared to resettlement elsewhere accompanied by immediate access to a major financial package for assistance and compensation. Faced with waiting ten years to return to Israel or getting

Yes you have an opportunity to return to Israel, but you also have a variety of other options.

the logic of the 'wishing to live at peace' clause in Resolution 194 suggests that the extent of permitted return could be linked to the evolution of conditions of true peace. If peace proves to be genuine and resilient then it becomes credible to say that 194 supports a large return; if lasting peace is uncertain then a large return will itself undermine a willingness to live at peace.

The main point is that the scope and force of resolution 194 is open to wide interpretation. For the purposes of the negotiations, the key issue is that whatever is agreed upon by way of implementation of 194 must be affirmed to be adequate fulfillment of Resolution 194. If such an 'adequate fulfillment' clause is part of the agreement, it would be highly desirable to affirm that the agreement was based on mutual acceptance of 194. Thus Israel should not treat mention of Resolution 194 as anathema.

The option of returning

The option to actually return is the central issue. For Palestinian leaders, the key is meaningful choice. They need to be able to turn to their people and say 'Yes you have an opportunity to return to Israel, but you also have a variety of other options. Some of them are quite attractive. You decide.' Israel and the Palestinians might wisely put aside the question of the basis on which such options to return are grounded.

based on humanitarian grounds) are mistaken. They and other Israelis can in fact agree too much more without any risk of being overwhelmed by refugees. A variety of tools to do this are available:

Establishing a Rate of Return: Ideally the Palestinian leadership would like to avoid any regulation of the option to return to Israel. Their idea is to offer the refugees a menu of alternative options sufficiently attractive so as to avoid any need to restrict implementation. Ideally then it would just work out that 95 percent of the refugees would decide to accept compensation and resettlement elsewhere rather than returning to Israel.

Israel, of course, can't put itself in a

There are ways to give large numbers of Palestinian refugees a genuine option of returning.

situation in which there are no guarantees that it won't be overwhelmed by Palestinian refugees deciding that all things considered, they would like to become Israelis. So from an Israeli point of view, something more is required. The temptation is to impose a total cap. To say, for instance, that only 100,000 or 200,000 refugees can ever return. (200,000 is roughly the

money, new homes and land elsewhere, most would choose the latter. In any event, the actual numbers entering would be proportional to existing demographics.

- The 1948 Refugees: From an Israeli point of view the return of some refugees is more threatening than the return of others. The least threatening are the actual 1948 refugees, as opp-

osed to their adult children and grandchildren. A child of 15 in 1948 is today 68 years old. This elderly and dwindling population is well past childbearing age. Their return, accompanied by minor children in the rare cases where they exist, poses no long-term impact on Israeli demographics. Similarly they pose no security threat. Yet surely as a matter of justice, priority should go to these elderly refugees. Moreover, the total number of living 1948 refugees is quite limited. Of the 300,000 or so refugees living in Lebanon, not more than 30,000 fall into this category. Subject to some regulation of the rate of return, Israel can extend an option to all of the actual 1948 refugees to return. It will find that relatively few decide to do so because of their age and dislocation from adult children and grandchildren. Giving priority to the 1948 refugees is also desirable from an Israeli point of view because it pushes other more problematic classes of refugees further back in the queue.

- Location of return: The refugees will have lots of options to return to places other than Israel. For those seeking to become citizens of Israel, with the right to live where they please, only a very limited number could be accommodated each year. While there is no need to say that the only basis for such returnees is Israel's 'humanitarian generosity,' priority should clearly go to those with pressing human needs. De facto this would result in the same outcome as the explicitly 'humanitarian basis' proposal put on the table by the Israeli government.

But there are ways to give large numbers of Palestinian refugees a genuine option of returning to land that is today Israel. The idea of land swaps is now part of the negotiations. In exchange for territory that Israel seeks to annex to accommodate settlements in the West Bank, it will swap areas adjacent to the Gaza Strip. Since these areas will become part of the Palestinian state, large numbers of refugees can be settled there. This is a powerful solution. It allows the

leadership to say that refugees are able to return to what is today part of Israel.

Unfortunately it does not seem that this idea is having the powerful effect that some had expected. In part this is because Palestinians still cling to the idea of returning to their homes. In part it is because being in refugee resettlement areas adjacent to Gaza sounds awfully like being in new refugee camps. And in part, because 'returning to Israeli land which becomes Palestinian' may feel like a bit of a shell game.

It is possible however to modify the

Just as the Jewish settlers would not be Palestinian citizens, so too, these Palestinians would not be Israeli citizens. Such options do not have to be of a large magnitude, they could be limited to a few thousand. The idea however is to offer to the refugees a wide variety of possibilities, an offer that is not easily categorized, not easily dismissed – while at the same time protecting Israel.

These three tools, regulating the rate of return, focusing on the 1948 refugees and using land swaps, would operate within the larger context of compensation and resettlement

Choice-based approach is also best for Israel.

'land swap' idea in ways that will make it more meaningful for refugees. The key here is maintain one principle: the refugees returning to these areas will be citizens of the state of Palestine, and any children born to them will also be Palestinian citizens. Within this framework, there is considerable room for creative ideas. One option is to not press ahead with an exchange of sovereignty. Rather, Israel could lease certain areas to the State of Palestine, and similarly it could lease from the Palestinians settlement areas in the West Bank (thus giving the Palestinians sovereignty over a larger percentage of the West Bank.) Secondly, such areas need not be limited to territories adjacent to Gaza. If it was thought that ultimately all the leased territories would become sovereign areas then they should be adjacent to either Gaza or the West Bank. Along the Green Line, such areas need not be large. In fact there might be a number of quite small pocket-villages, designed specifically so as to not resemble vast refugee camps. It might even be possible for some leased areas to be in interior regions of Israel, parallel to isolated settlement areas leased within the West Bank, far from the Green Line.

alternatives outside Israel, whether in the Palestinian state, Arab countries, Europe and the United States. Thus, a rich menu of choice can be devised, accompanied by some regulatory structure which safeguards Israel. From a political point of view, a choice-based approach of this sort has major advantages. For the Palestinian leadership it allows them to avoid charges of having abandoned the right of return. Rather, it gives them the opportunity to deliver to the refugees a variety of attractive alternatives.

Importantly, such a choice-based approach is also best for Israel. Other approaches might wrest from the PLO a verbal statement affirming that the refugee claims have been satisfied. Yet to truly end the conflict, it will be necessary for millions of Palestinians to actually feel that they themselves have made a decision about return, resettlement and compensation. Only then will the refugee issue be finally resolved, a necessary condition for truly ending the conflict.

'Track II Anti-Incitement'

Joe Bock observes the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through the lens of lessons learned from South Asia and a pioneering project in 'Track II Anti-Incitement'.

People in Jerusalem often comment that their city is the 'navel of the world.' Some say this jokingly; others seriously. But while Jerusalem is the epicenter of monotheism, it is but one place, admittedly a significant one, where ethnoreligious tension and conflict manifests itself in violent ways. Even if it is the 'navel of the world,' perhaps it can learn from elsewhere.

In this article, I share insights about ethnoreligious tension and conflict in South Asia and explain how they were used in the formulation of a project in Israel and Palestine. I then relate some observations about what has been learned thus far from this project and offer some questions that remain unanswered.

An Asian parallel

India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have been plagued with tension and conflict between groups of different faith identities, what observers often refer

delineate with precision. Nevertheless, there are five insights about ethnoreligious tension and conflict in South Asia that were of particular significance when designing a project to prevent violence in Israel, Jerusalem and the West Bank. They were derived mainly from observations about Hindu-Muslim violence in India, and Christian-Muslim violence in Pakistan.

First, ethnoreligious violence is often cultivated by those who have something to gain from it. It tends not to occur out of some spontaneous combustion of ethnoreligious passion. Rather, there are leaders who foment violence deliberately, with the help of operatives who work as mercenaries or out of ideological devotion to engineer riots. In this sense, it is essential to distinguish between violence promoting leaders and riot engineers. The former usually work behind the scenes and often maintain a dubious devotion to a religious tradition while exploiting

In the state of Gujarat, India, there are three main types of violence promoting leaders: *real estate developers* who use riots as a means of bypassing legal safeguards afforded to squatters; *politicians* who benefit from violence by making a ruling party seem incapable of governing or as a means of garnering support for a sectarian agenda; and, *bootleggers*, who sometimes cultivate riots after losing territory to a rival alcohol peddling organization.

The second insight is that aid agencies working to prevent ethnoreligious violence tend to implement three types of projects. The first are *promotive*. These implicitly foster ethnoreligious harmony by getting people of different groups to work together. For example, an aid agency might conduct a sporting event with people of different faiths who otherwise would not tend to interact with one another. In so doing, they are careful not to make reference to the need to improve interfaith relations for fear that to mention underlying tension would unwittingly raise the profile of what is considered to be a minor problem, thereby making it worse. The second type of projects are *preventive*. They are explicit about the goal of building ethnoreligious harmony. For example, poetry contests are sponsored with an interfaith harmony theme. And the third are *preemptive*. These are activities designed to arrest incipient violence. They tend to involve providing safe haven to a besieged minority that is under attack, or the intervention of a respected community leader who convincingly argues against violence before it occurs.

The third insight derived from South Asia is that aid agencies tend to focus the overwhelming amount of their efforts on promotive and preventive activities, seemingly to the neglect of preemptive ones. In a sense, this reflects human nature in that

Ethnoreligious violence is often cultivated by those who have something to gain from it.

to as 'communal violence,' or, as I will refer to it here, as 'ethnoreligious violence.' This violence has occurred between Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, as well as other smaller groups. But the role of religion, the influence of religious leaders who espouse fundamentalist viewpoints, and the involvement of militant groups that exploit certain theological perspectives for their own advantage is difficult to

its emotional potency with impunity, hijacking, as it were, the absolutist, exclusivist teachings of possibly unsuspecting fundamentalist religious leaders. Riot engineers, in contrast, undertake the more seedy operations of fomenting bloodshed, rather like campaign consultants design and execute strategies to win elections but, in this case, they implement schemes designed to incite people into killing each other.

participating in an interfaith activity, like a sports event, or attending a conference on interfaith harmony, for instance, is generally pleasant and painless, whereas intervening when there is incipient violence can be both uncomfortable and dangerous.

The fourth insight is that even when strategies of aid agencies might neglect preemptive intervention and focus overwhelmingly on promotive and preventive activities, they can be successful in preventing ethnoreligious violence, especially when matters of contention are secular, rather than religious, in nature. In Ahmedabad,

Religious symbols seem to have acute potency in fomenting bloodshed.

India, one agency was successful in preventing a riot when riot engineers spread rumors that the Muslims had been rooting for the Pakistani cricket team that had just defeated India's team. Peace committees of the aid agency learned that one of the Muslims had, in fact, applauded a play of a Pakistani, but that it had been an expression of awe at a particularly skillful move and did not reflect an overall rooting for

the Pakistani team. They then counteracted the rumor by explaining this, thereby successfully preventing what could have evolved into an ugly confrontation between Hindus and Muslims.

In contrast, this same aid agency was hounded out of slums in which it had worked for years in traditional relief and development projects, where they had also conducted promotive and



Powerful symbolism. Pope John Paul II surrounded by Israeli flags at the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest shrine, during his visit to Jordan, Israel, Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories in March 2000. Photo: Gabriel Bouys/Pressens Bild



Religious symbols may emphasize harmony or serve as fodder for division. Photo: Elizabeth Dalziel/Pressens Bild

preventive activities, after riot engineers were able to exploit the emotional potency of the destruction of a mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu militants. Riots engulfed those slums.

And that leads to the fifth insight that religious symbols seem to have

acute potency in fomenting bloodshed. They might involve the destruction or defacing of a holy book, showing disrespect during a sacred ritual, or dishonoring or harming a place of worship or monument of religious significance.

Non-official actors can more openly brainstorm about solutions, the idea was to develop a second track in anti-incitement capacity.

Lessons learned for Israel/ Jerusalem/West Bank

These insights were discussed during a luncheon meeting held between the respective directors of the Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center (based in Bethlehem), the Harry S Truman Institute for the Advancement of International Peace at Hebrew University (based in Jerusalem), and Catholic Relief Services' Jerusalem-West Bank-Gaza Project (also based in Jerusalem). It was decided that a project would be designed that mirrors in anti-incitement what has been done in diplomacy – namely, that a second track would be formed. In diplomacy, a second track normally involves civic leaders and academics who are outside of official diplomatic circles. They can often search for solutions to knotty diplomatic issues in ways that government officials may be disinclined towards. This approach has proven to be valuable in a number of international conflict situations. However, to our knowledge, such a second track approach had never been used in the field of anti-incitement.

During the Oslo Peace Process, an official anti-incitement committee was formed to counteract malicious statements made in official circles by those in the Israeli Government or Palestinian National Authority. The committee had officials of both groups, as well as prominent U.S. citizens, assigned to it. But, just as with there being a second track in diplomacy, when non-official actors can more openly brainstorm about solutions, the idea was to develop a second track in anti-incitement capacity, aimed at unofficial community leaders.

The overall goal of the project was to prevent violence. This, of course, was acceptable to the director of the Truman Institute, since he felt that everyone could agree to this objective. It was also viewed by the director of Wi'am as being acceptable to Palestinians since it did not infer 'normalization.' Instead, it was felt that most people could agree to the goal of

preventing violence even if they felt strongly about the occupation otherwise.

From objections to objectives

There were five overall objectives for the project. The first was to develop a compilation of the types of approaches used in Israel and Palestine to preempt violence. Numerous other organizations were implementing promotive and preventive activities. Therefore, this project was aimed at what was felt to be a neglected area of intervention. It would focus on identifying early warning signs of violence and then on the timely action taken to prevent it.

The second objective was that we would seek to get a better understanding of the role of religious symbols, both from the standpoint of how they are used to foment violence as well as how they might be used to prevent it. This required an action research component since it was largely an unexplored area of social science research globally, not to mention regarding the Middle East in particular.

The third objective was to develop the capacities of young people who had leadership potential and were religious believers. Rather than recruiting people with a secular view of the world, it was felt that those who had a sense of

It was also clear that historical events were viewed radically different by the religious leaders.

the theological underpinnings of interfaith harmony in the three major monotheistic religions, and a mentoring of young people with leadership promise by more established religious leaders.

Implementing Anti-Incitement

A proposal was written to undertake what we called the 'Track II Anti-Incitement Project.' Funding was received from the US Embassy/Tel Aviv under a program called Regional and Professional Technical Cooperation. In addition, staff support was provided by the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church (GBGM-UMC) and additional financial support was provided by Catholic Relief Services. Eighteen students were recruited. Nine had Israeli citizenship; the other nine were Palestinians. Six were Christian; six Jewish; and six Muslim. They were recruited from Bethlehem, Hebrew, and Hebron universities. Three religious leaders agreed to serve as mentors – one mufti, one priest, and

They were asked to do action research about preemptive interventions. They were also encouraged to attempt to implement an anti-incitement activity and to record the results.

A series of workshops were convened in three different locations. The first was held at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute which borders Bethlehem and Jerusalem and is considered to be 'neutral territory.' Other workshop sessions were held at the Truman Institute and Wi'am.

At the second workshop that was held at Tantur, an example was provided of a preemptive intervention that had occurred in the Middle Eastern context. In December 1997, Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron confronted a Jewish militant group that was planning to throw the head of a pig onto the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem in an act of provocation to incite Jewish-Muslim violence. The rabbi wrote to the Chairman of the Palestinian National Authority, Yasser Arafat, condemning the plan, stating: 'We are sad to hear of the criminal plot by extremists who wished to harm the faith and faithful and inflame relations between the religions. We denounce any attempt and evil thought which could put off peace and friendship.' He also expressed warm greetings to the Islamic community during their month of Ramadan fasting. This act served to quell violence and police action was taken against the Jewish militant group.

The example of the rabbi was used as the basis upon which to build an understanding of preemptive intervention in the Middle Eastern context. But substantive discussion about preemption was limited due to the need of the students to work through their emotions and concerns. We found that we had to spend a substantial amount of time on group process, more than

Students were encouraged to try to have both Palestinians and Israelis work together.

religious conviction would be a more promising prospect from the standpoint of being able to influence various religious groups as they moved into positions of leadership in the future.

Fourth, there was an emphasis on action whenever that would be possible. Rather than simply studying the problem, the intent was to encourage actual preemptive intervention and then record the results.

And, finally, there was an objective to develop a greater understanding of

one rabbi.

Both the Truman Institute and Wi'am hired program assistants who worked with Israeli and Palestinian students respectively. The GBGM-UMC and Catholic Relief Services provided overall management and administrative support for the project.

The students were asked to form teams or to work individually. If a team was formed, the students were encouraged to try to have both Palestinians and Israelis work together.

The students did not significantly uncover violence and attempts to preempt it.

we expected would be required. However, 'ice breakers' (structured activities that encouraged enjoyable interaction and creativity) were used at the start of workshops, and these helped to get the students to a point that they could focus on the goal of preventing violence.

We also learned that the Palestinians found it to be very difficult to be involved in the project precisely because they suffered scrutiny by their friends and colleagues who claimed that any joint project, regardless of

whether it focused on preventing violence, was tantamount to normalization and therefore was endorsing what they considered to be an unjust status quo. The pressure in this regard intensified as the Middle East peace process deteriorated, eventually resulting in some of the Palestinian students withdrawing and having to be replaced.

As the project unfolded, the religious leaders presented their views about religious symbols and sacred texts that emphasized harmony and those

that served as fodder for division. During various workshops, they themselves exhibited tensions that were symptomatic to those in the society at large. While this was initially seen as problematic, it was later reinterpreted for the students in a different light. The tension showed how passionate people are about their faiths and how difficult it can be, even among those of good will, to overcome their tension in amicable ways.

It was also clear that historical events were viewed radically different by the religious leaders. Again, this was important for the students to see since divergent interpretations of history can feed the flames of ethnoreligious nationalism.



The Western Wall and neighbouring al Aqsa Mosque are obvious targets for provocation. A visit by Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the al-Aqsa mosque compound sparked off the severe clashes last fall. Photo: Pressens Bild

Results

As of this writing, this project is still being implemented, though it has been curtailed due to widespread violence in Israel and Palestine. However, there are a number of observations that can be shared at this point. First, even though students had been encouraged to conduct joint projects, most of them stuck with those of their same group. This is not surprising inasmuch as students seemed to need to undergo a personal transformation in order to undertake a joint project. Further group-work during workshops might have resulted in a greater number of joint projects.

The second observation is that the Israelis tended to feel that the Palestinians were finger pointing. The Israelis focused on the Jewish community, whereas the Palestinians focused on both the Palestinian and Jewish communities. The Israeli students expressed consternation about this, stating that the Palestinians should only focus on their own community. The Palestinians, in contrast, argued that they were living under occupation and that the Israelis were the occupiers and therefore it was only natural that they would focus on those who, in their view, were the perpetrators of injustice. This line of debate precipitated a lecture and discussion by the program manager about the use of non-violent direct action, clarifying it from violence prevention. (Surprisingly, the students vehemently argued that non-violent direct action was not applicable to their political context, and yet, within a week, they were preparing to pass out leaflets together – both Israelis and Palestinians – on the campus of Hebrew University to cry out against the use of religion as an instrument of hatred. This was the one instance in which joint collective action was envisioned and actually planned. Unfortunately, the Palestinian students were unable to participate due to a lack of permits for entry into Jerusalem.)

The third observation was that while action was encouraged, very little

occurred. Students visited places where hateful religious rhetoric was being promulgated, but they felt reluctant, perhaps fearful, to pass out leaflets or hold up posters, for instance, in an effort to counteract it.

aggression, especially at the Temple Mount in the Old City that was designed to incite violence. Fourth, they found an alarming amount of *electronic* aggression – hateful material on the Internet. And, fifth, there was *physical*

The monitoring of aggression needs to be inter-religious in that what is said by one group might not be seen as aggressive by that group but is seen as such by the other group.

This leads to the fourth observation that the students gravitated towards established religious leaders. They seemed to feel comfortable appealing to them to intervene rather than doing so themselves.

And, finally, perhaps the most significant observation was that the students did not significantly uncover violence and attempts to preempt it. Rather, they found an alarming amount of aggression that could, eventually, incite violence. Whereas our project design had been to identify early warning signs of violence and effective methods of preempting it, what the students uncovered were more toward the front end of the conflict process. They were not so much warning signs as they were actual infringements of human decency and civility that could be dealt with much earlier than in waiting for the rapid

aggression, violence, but, as mentioned previously, it was relatively limited in scope.

Lingering questions

While the insights derived from the project were helpful and will provide a basis upon which to design future efforts, a number of difficult questions presented themselves. The first and perhaps most important question is how to design a project to most effectively counteract aggression? A number of analysts have focused on what has been called the ‘warning-response problem.’ This infers the establishment of a monitoring regime and a timely intervention when faced with imminent violence. Intervention at that point can be risky and tends to be possible only in a relatively narrow set of extreme circumstances. In comparison, emphasizing the

Preferable to focus on established religious leaders rather than on young people.

escalation of tension at a flashpoint period.

The types of aggression were fivefold. First, they spotted *written* aggression, often in newspapers and other handouts. Second, they heard *verbal* aggression, usually at places of worship. Third, they witnessed *symbolic*

counteraction of aggression in all of its forms – written, verbal, symbolic, electronic, and physical – is a much broader focus that allows for intervention in much less extreme or risky circumstances. But how does one go about formulating an aggression counteraction project? How does that

It is important to make a distinction here between aggressive behavior and structural injustice.

differ from the activities of anti-defamation or anti-racism organizations, or, comparatively, to the work of human rights groups?

The second question is whether it is possible for a project like this one to be successful if interventions, not monitoring, is inter-religious rather than intra-religious. Clearly the monitoring of aggression needs to be inter-religious in that what is said by one group might not be seen as aggressive by that group but is seen as such by the other group. Aggression is in the eye of the beholder. But for those of one group to intervene assertively against the aggression of another group, tension can tend to be thereby increased rather than diffused. Instead of religious leaders confronting their venomous co-religionists, as was recommended by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, what seems to be much more common is religious leaders or social action organizations accusing those of the other group of aggression.

Note that it is important to make a distinction here between aggressive behavior and structural injustice. For one group to stand up for justice when another group is the perpetrator of injustice is, of course, necessary and can be done through non-violent direct action. What I am mentioning here, in contrast, relates to behavior rather than structure and it seems that having religious leaders of the same faith confront their co-religionists who are behaving aggressively might be more effective than having those of the other group doing so. Why? Because the credibility of the venomous religious leaders can be challenged effectively by those who have a similar stature in a given community, who can marshal

theological arguments with equal or better sophistication among the faithful.

Third, will an approach aimed at arresting aggression at an early stage with co-religionists only be successful when it is done early, before a society is polarized? One wonders, for instance, if working with religious leaders now in Sri Lanka, which is plagued with Sinhalese-Tamil violence, would be a viable approach, given the extreme polarization of that society. Not only are Israelis and Palestinians polarized, but they are in a state of occupiers and occupied. The intense pressure placed on the Palestinians to not participate in the project since it was construed as constituting normalization begs the question as to whether a project aimed at the middle level (as distinct from the top level of official leaders) can be successful in a polarized environment which involves an occupation.

Fourth, would it be preferable to focus on established religious leaders rather than on young people who hold strong religious beliefs and have leadership potential? Established religious leaders have credibility within certain communities and a legitimacy to speak out when they feel that there has been an abuse of their faith. It is they who have the stature to stand up against ethno-religious aggression and to challenge the credibility of violence

promoting leaders who exploit theological arguments to foment ethno-religious nationalism.

And, fifth, what is the most effective way to help people do what is uncomfortable to do – to confront aggression? As was mentioned previously, attending promotive and preventive events can be pleasant and invigorating. But to stand up to ethno-religious aggression, especially with one's co-religionists, can be uncomfortable, even if one is an established religious leader. To do so amounts to a public theological duel, and losing such a duel can risk ostracism within one's faith community.

Anti-incitement is a relatively new area of endeavor. It is my sense that it is rather different from the work of anti-defamation, anti-racism and human rights organizations. I suspect that Track II anti-incitement is likely to be most effective when it is intra-religious rather than inter-religious, though the monitoring of ethno-religious aggression would need to be inter-religious. I am hopeful that even in polarized societies, including those composed of the occupied and the occupiers, that Track II anti-incitement can serve as a useful approach in

I suspect that Track II anti-incitement is likely to be most effective when it is intra-religious rather than inter-religious.

fostering peace. Perhaps in many places throughout the world it can serve to help prevent the use of religion as an instrument of hatred rather than love.

New Routes for Life and Peace?

Eskil Jonsson discusses issues of globalisation and religion as a backdrop for new challenges to peaceful conflict transformation.

There is a growing awareness and interest among churches to engage themselves in conflict prevention and peace building. This has not always been the case. Previously, other voluntary organizations have engaged themselves, while the churches have in fact been somewhat reluctant. I am not thinking particularly about peace negotiations in areas of crisis like in the Middle East, in the Horn of Africa or the Balkans, although these regions are some of the most widely known areas of conflict today. Instead, we can now see how conflicts erupt which are related to globalisation, marginalisation and/or intolerance.

Some of these local, social or cultural conflicts are formed in connection with power struggles and political competition for scarce resources at higher levels of society. It is feasible to say the globalisation of the economy is largely driven by the economic interests of transnational corporations which influence development policies, regulations for immigration or downsizing of social security and health care in many countries all over the world. The consequences are most clearly seen in poor countries like Africa. The dramatic and open clashes that we watch on TV or read about in newspapers every day often relate to economic injustice which is difficult to treat with conventional methods of conflict management focusing on inter-cultural or inter-religious conflicts within states. There is therefore a need for thorough problem analyses that can take the root causes

of conflict seriously, particularly when it comes to the effects of globalisation on marginalized groups.

It goes almost without saying that most people are in favour of a truly free and fair market. The major obstacle are not centralised and planned economies, which are being dismantled rapidly these days, but rather that the actual business forces which are not in favour of a free market with fair trade and equal competition. What one could say rather is that the market is free in such a sense that it is those actors who are financially strong and those who are less concerned about ethical or other environmental concerns that feel free to do as they like. What also can be observed is that globalisation does not seem to bring more mutual solidarity but rather more economic rationalism and self-interest.

church identity and equal partnership between international actors are difficult to manifest as a result of the pressures for rapid modernisation and the fragmented funding of different projects. In terms of leadership and decision-making a typical 'narrow management' develops instead which becomes shortsighted and fragmented rather than based on overall identity and purpose.

An Inter-religious Perspective

It could therefore become important for the churches and the Life and Peace Institute (LPI) to further develop knowledge about how to deal with internal conflicts and how they are related to the larger world society and economy. It may thus necessary to explain such problems from an inter-religious and ecumenical perspective,

Globalisation does not seem to bring more mutual solidarity.

At a conference of the Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Sida) on forming strategies for fighting poverty in November last year, attention was raised about environmental issues as a source of conflict, as they are expected to increase in the future. What then will be causing conflicts is unfair competition for scarce natural resources, shaping in turn other inter-ethnic or inter-cultural conflicts. It would therefore be appropriate and timely to draw increased attention to the need to see local conflicts between individual actors or groups in a more holistic perspective and explain them in relation to the larger world society and the global economic situation.

I have shown in a previous study, entitled 'Narrow Management – The Quest for Unity in Diversity', how local

i.e. to what extent may the various religions offer similar explanations to such larger problems as globalisation. An interfaith ethic has recently been outlined by world religious leaders, in for example publication *World Faiths Dialogue*, and the common denominators are: love, solidarity, truth and justice.

The purpose of this article is thus to underline the need to further broaden the concept of peace building both in terms of understanding the root-causes of conflicts, but also how organisations such as LPI can support ecumenical and other religious bodies in their analysis of such issues from a Christian and inter-religious ethical perspective.

Traditional research

As often stated in peace and conflict

Some peace building models can become too standardised or prescriptive.

research literature the 'traditional' view on peace making has largely assumed that conflicts arise between states. After the close of the First World War, however, it has become clear that conflicts arise more typically as intrastate wars, even though international conflicts remain. As already argued above it would be important to pay greater attention to the larger world society and effects of globalisation. Such a conclusion would probably also find support from some of the recent studies in sociology in the vein of new institutional theory which explain the increasing fragmentation of identities in modern society in relation to world wide modernisation processes. We could also go back to the classical studies of Weber if we wish to find fundamental explanations about the use of culture and religion as a way to legitimise power.

As a consequence of focusing on

root causes, research becomes problem-based rather than merely descriptive and goes beyond the 'obvious' and first hand explanations of conflicts as they seem to appear. Otherwise religion, ethnicity or culture alone may be taken as the prime factors to explain conflicts rather than being the 'resources' through which peace and unity and cooperation can be built. Samuel Huntington's 'vision' of a clash between civilisations (in his book of the same name) may become a reality if some of the world powers assume that Western versions of culture and religion or the 'world community' should set the agenda for conflict transformation.

Problem-based learning

A wider holistic approach would then lead us to develop research on peace related issues with an increased emphasis on inter-disciplinary and inter-religious perspectives. In order to define the specific problem and root-

causes of conflicts that can help to find the relevant solutions a problem-based pedagogy for research and education on peace building is suggested. The conventional conflict analysis models appear to limit themselves to describe and analyse conflicts as they appear but spend less time in analysing the problematic root-causes of conflict. Consequently there may be little effort to come up with various alternatives that recommend complex and time-consuming ways to 'resolve' for instance conflicts related to economic injustice. In a similar way some peace building models can become too standardised or prescriptive as to *how* to manage conflicts rather than allowing enough time to a problem-based analysis. With a problem-based approach, we may have an opportunity to identify the root-causes and to own and direct a contextualised approach to peace, mutual cooperation and economic justice.

Global economy, bad governance?

It was made quite clear that bad governance and the global economic situation have certain problematic effects on the security situation in Kenya, as presented, for example, by Dr. Peter Bisem of National Christian Council of Kenya in his paper 'Peace and security situation in Kenya'. Similar views were reported at the Sida conference mentioned above, stating that bad governance centralised political power constituted much of the internal conflicts and marginalisation. Other studies from Kenya on privatisation processes demonstrate clearly that recent market orientation has implied that business actors with political affiliations are the ones who have benefited and this has contributed to wider marginalisation of the poor. Widespread opposition has developed not least as a result of the sale of public property at very low prices, with financial capital that had been accumulated as a result of savings by the labourers. On visiting Tanzania in



World finance protesters sit in the street near World Bank in Washington.
Photo: Rick Bowmer/AP/Pressens Bild

1999, I was told by university lecturers at the business department of University of Dar es Salaam that similar problems developed as a result of privatisation in Tanzania.

Other reports from Africa indicate, in a similar way, that conflicts such as in Liberia, Rwanda and Congo should be explained as reactions from groups that do not receive what they may have been promised by political leaders. Such leaders control resources which in many instances have been received from outside and such leaders would probably not stay in power if they did not have external political and huge financial support. I have therefore some difficulty to explain conflicts as intrastate wars which are to be managed as internal differences. It would also not be difficult to understand that internal conflicts are commonly formed in relation to different ethnicities or between traditional and modern forces.

Globalisation with privatisation and deregulation will not explain all of the economic injustice, of course. It may be interesting, however to remember that the 'universal culture' of communism created a centrally planned economy. This is particularly interesting as globalisation is another economic culture that is now being spread globally. Scientifically, both cultures are characterised by a strong belief in rapid economic growth either through narrow focus on grand investment schemes and central planning or through the belief in global economic growth. Therefore, there is reason not to take the recent pressure for globalisation and economic freedom for granted as the main guarantee for peace.

Religion's role

The economic injustice might become an increasingly problematic conflict issue and it would alarm the churches to act in congruence with its identity and belief. When I visited some of religious leaders and other proponents for mutual religious dialogues in the

Horn of Africa recently it was suggested that there is need to develop a common religious identity that can bind countries together and help for instance the two countries of Eritrea and Ethiopia to develop friendship and mutual cooperation.

The important contribution being made by religious leaders of the two countries with the support from the ecumenical family in order to build friendship between the countries is just one example that shows the increasing role that religion plays nowadays when it comes to peace and development. A very crucial issue, as I see it, is to what extent the religious organisations within themselves are able to demonstrate unity and mutual understanding. If not it could be too optimistic to think that peace will be achieved just through external activities

our peace building programmes is that modern and international criteria for, capacity building for example, may come into conflict with traditional ways of decision-making. This is also what the problematic effects of globalisation are about, the spread of western oriented cultures that may come into conflict with traditional and local social contexts.

In response to such conflicts a stewardship approach may be useful as it takes seriously the role of religion and tradition but also demands efficiency and accountability according to modern rationality. This also gives prominence to issues of mutual sharing of resources.

A *stewardship-oriented* model of analysis could be useful as it could find supporters from different religions as well as outside the religious

Many local churches are today developing capacities for peace building activities.

and common declarations. On the other hand a common religious identity would probably be as useful for the internal unity as well as to be a symbol for unity and cooperation in the society at large.

Even if such a religious ethic would probably be shared by many other members of society who are not adherents to religious institutions, it would be a question of credibility for the churches to exercise unity, love and mutual solidarity as is outlined in the Christian ethical perspective. It should be further remembered that such an ethic and identity is assumed in the idea of stewardship of God's resources, and it is particularly on this idea that the different religions may not vary much after all.

Stewardship – A religious perspective on conflict transformation?

What we have learned from some of

communities as it is not greatly tied to any particular doctrine.

When it comes to the need for cooperation within the international ecumenical or inter-religious community it is most important to clarify the roles that have to be played. Many local churches are today developing capacities for peace building activities. Both for the sake of organisational efficiency, as well as to demonstrate unity, this will be a real challenge to local and regional inter-religious or ecumenical bodies. This is also necessary in order to provide channels for learning about how to build peace.

It is in this way that I see that LPI could develop its research work as well as the education and training of peace builders in very close cooperation with the churches and other religious organisations. In this focus, it would be an asset to refer to well-known concepts within these organizations.

Sources for healing

Rienzie Perera share some lessons learned during his years working for peace and justice in Sri Lanka.

The island of Sri Lanka has a population of 17 million people. Because of its religious and ethnic diversity one can say that Sri Lanka is a multi-religious, ethnic, and cultural country. Sri lankan diversity is its richness. Yet, because of political manipulations of religion, ethnicity and language this diversity has become a major source of conflict. With the escalation of the conflict and the continuation of war, suspicions and divisions based on religion, ethnicity and language become visible and the disintegration of society is rapidly taking place. It is within this context one has to work for peace and justice in Sri Lanka.

Involve the congregation

In 1988, I was posted to the south of Sri Lanka to serve one of the oldest Christian communities in a village called Baddegama. I served this church until the year 1992 and then invited by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka I served as its General Secretary from 1992-1998. The situation in the country during these 10 years challenged me to realise that my ministry is to the whole community and I should not confine my work only to Christians.

I had to explain this to the members of my church and win their support to devote my time to the community as a whole. This was not an easy task but I managed to win the support of the majority and also to get them involved in justice and peace work. The lesson I learned was the necessity to get one's own religious community involved in the work one does and to rely on their solidarity.

Building bridges of solidarity

During these years in the south, we

experienced the pain of people, especially those who have lived in the east of Sri Lanka for generations but had to abandon their homes and return to the south for security reasons. Although they were originally from the south of Sri Lanka they had no roots in the south because they belonged to the second or third generation of persons who had migrated from the south to the east of Sri Lanka. Over these years a number of inter-ethnic marriages had taken place and it was therefore a well integrated community. This integration enabled them to transcend ethnic and religious barriers.

The Tamil militants wanted them to leave that part of the country where they had lived for generations and return to the south. They were driven away from that region because they belonged to the dominant ethnic group, the Sinhalese, whom the Tamil militants look upon as the oppressors. Through fear they left everything and came to the south for refuge and also in search of their roots. Their desperate situation demanded an immediate response. I invited the leaders of these families- women and men, young and old - to the church hall to discuss their plight and plan a programme of relief and rehabilitation.

The programme planned by the Christians was called into question by some of the leading Buddhist monks and Buddhist lay leaders. The argument of the monks was that I, as a Christian priest was trying to convert these Buddhist refugees, by offering them relief. Their accusation was based on the premise that the missionaries during the colonial era used similar methods to convert people. I was convinced that my intentions were not to convert but to help these uprooted people. I had no intention to exploit the vulnerability of these victims of violence for conversion. The Buddhists were not convinced, however.

This encounter made me realise, although love and compassion are at the heart of majority of religions, there

are deep- seated suspicions and hatred which divide and keep us apart. Very often our own religious histories are against us. Therefore it is important for us to avoid past mistakes of our forefathers and mothers and create new history. Sometimes there is a temptation to think that because we have donor agency money we can do anything we like without being sensitive to the feelings of people.

True intention to serve

I learned from experience that if our true intention is to serve the victims in a broken society and especially, if the victims are from different faith communities, then we need to win the confidence and the support of religious leaders of all faiths in a given situation. In any inter religious context one needs to build bonds of solidarity among the religious communities to serve the people better. In many inter religious contexts the arrogance and the bigotry of religious leaders contribute to the perpetuation of suffering. The humility of the founders of our religions should enlighten our minds and inspire the work we do for the innocent victims of conflict.

In my context, I realised that the only way to win the confidence and support of religious leaders, whether they are Buddhists, Christians, Muslims or Hindus were to make friends with them and involve them at the initial stage of discussions and planning. If such partnerships are built at grassroots level, the resources of each religious community could be shared for the alleviation of suffering of people.

I believe, in a world where religions have been at the center of conflicts can also become a source for healing of nation, mending of communities and transformation of conflicts. This process can take place if the devotees of these religions are immersed and nurtured in the liberative spiritualities of their respective religions. This should become one of the main foundations to build a culture of peace in Sri Lanka.

LPI News



Eskil Jonsson appointed Executive Director

On December 4, Dr. Eskil Jonsson assumed his post as Executive Director at LPI. Jonsson, a specialist in business management with extensive experience of the Churches' development cooperation in the global South comes to LPI from the University of Uppsala.

"Eskil Jonsson is just right for the needs that Life & Peace has right now," commented Bishop Biörn Fjärstedt, President of the LPI's Board. "He has, to say the least, extensive experience of the Horn of Africa, where a large part of the work of LPI has taken place for nearly a decade."

Jonsson's academic merits are mainly with the fields of business management, organizational theory and leadership, as well as theology and development studies. In 1998 he completed his Ph.D. on leadership and aid dependence in Ethiopia.

"It feels stimulating and challenging to come to such a dynamic organization as LPI. The issues that the Institute works with; peace, justice and reconciliation are of extreme urgency in those parts of the world where LPI operates," said Jonsson himself. "The support that LPI can offer the churches in, for example, Congo and the Horn of Africa, can be an important part of peace processes there," he continued.

Executive Committee sets new course

Convening in Uppsala at its December meeting, LPI's Executive Committee, comprised of the Institute's Nordic Board members discussed priorities and policies following the change of leadership at LPI.

The Committee stressed the need to focus more on giving local support to churches and others as they request and that more effort should be made

to integrate action and research as an intertwined research methodology. It was also discussed that new projects should reflect a general attitude of 'learning through experience and research' and that such learning should be shared with LPI's partners.

LPI delegation visits Congo-Brazzaville

A delegation of three LPI staff visited the war-torn country of Congo-Brazzaville in November of last year to assess the situation against the background of an envisioned pilot project in the region. The project aims to strengthen local constituencies implementing peacebuilding activities designed to halt escalations of violence and initiate processes of long-term development.

A similar project was been initiated by LPI in the bordering country of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo-Kinshasa) last autumn.

Staff

John Flynn, United States, has been appointed on a part time basis as Research Coordinator. He is presently pursuing a master's degree in the Department for Peace and Conflict Studies at the Uppsala University.

Runo Bergström, Sweden, has been recruited on a short term assignment in order to pursue exploratory peace building work in Congo/Brazzaville in close cooperation with ecumenical bodies and particularly the Swedish Covenant Church.

Hans Romkema, Holland, has also been recruited on a short time assignment to do an assessment for a possible peace building process in Congo Kinshasa.

Merawi Tezera, Sweden, has been appointed on a part time basis

particularly for IT support and for the development of LPI website.

Emanuel Mbennah, Tanzania, has been appointed as Research Officer at the LPI Nairobi office.

Elijah Ogoti Moirongo, Kenya, has been appointed as Finance Officer at the LPI Nairobi office.

Consultations

Several meeting and consultations are being held as a result of the increased engagements of the churches due to the launching of the WCC and UN campaign for a decade of non-violence. The Executive Director visited Kampala, Uganda, 21-24 March to discuss the role of the ecumenical bodies in the region of the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes and to find ways for LPI to cooperate with them.

Theological Education, Future Strategies and Peace Building

Rev. Dr. Andrew Kirk, Director of the Centre for Missiology and World Christianity at the Department of Theology, University of Birmingham, UK, also a member of the LPI Board, has been invited to conduct at few workshops and seminars on research and education on peace building. These seminars were held in Uppsala 4 - 5 April.

LPI Board Meeting

The annual Board Meeting of LPI will be held in Helsinki 5 - 11 June.

LPI publications



Reaching Reconciliation

Churches in the transition to democracy in Eastern and Central Europe

Editor Lucia Ann McSpadden, 2000, 280 pp.

This volume builds upon an in-depth analysis by the Life & Peace Institute of the churches in "new democracies". Of interest to theologians, policy-makers, activists, scholars and students of Eastern and Central Europe, this book is an important collec-

tion of history, analysis and understanding of the origins of societal conflict.

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After the revolutions

Democracy in East Central Europe

Essays based on a seminar organized jointly by: The Life & Peace Institute, Demokrati Akademin, Church World Forum, Skeppsholmen Folk High School.

Publication date: December 1996, 103 pp.

However written some years back, this report is worth reading. The essays examines the issues raised by political transformations still underway in the

future; a future which we already have to some extent entered by now. We are no longer at the threshold of the 21st century..

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