

PROJECT ON BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Report on Europe and Americas

Third Quarterly Report on Europe and Americas

July to September 2008

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BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Third Quarterly Report on Europe and Americas

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**Department of Politics and International Relations
International Islamic University Islamabad**

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Third Quarterly Report 2008

Reports for the period **July to September 2008**

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BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: July 01, 2008

Europe, North America and Rest of the World

Bakare Najimdeen

Period: From 22nd -28th June 2008

Headlines

North/West Europe

- FAO chief warns of high food prices
- European envoy: Shut Guantanamo soon
- EU calls on Iran to halt execution of youth
- EU expresses concern over human rights violations in Turkey
- EU official wants cheaper fruit and vegetables
- European Council urges BiH to continue reforms
- Rehn says Croatia's EU accession negotiations may wrap up in 2009
- PACE asks Turkey's Constitutional Court to rule according to European principles
- EC urges Albania to speed up electoral reform process
- Prominent Turkish intellectual acquitted of terrorism charges

- British Airways irked by Bush effect at Heathrow
- US Embassy in London's unpaid road tolls
- London...Islamic Finance Capital
- UK Police to Court Over Discrimination
- Handshake Costs Muslim Volunteer Prize
- Racism Rears in Cornwall
- Queen confers knighthood on Salman Rushdie

- Daunting Challenges Await New CFCM Chief (France)
- France rejects Turkish EU membership referendum proposal

- Denmark's Veiled Soccer Star

Southern Europe

- Greece apprehend human organ traffickers
- Greece to export water to drought-stricken Cyprus

Southeast Europe

- Serbian, Montenegrin police smash human-trafficking group
- Serbian Socialist Party suspends coalition talks with Radicals
- UN secretary-general says new plan on Kosovo aims to prevent conflicts in region
- UK to support establishment of Kosovo Security Force
- Sejdiu says Kosovo has no plans to hold new status talks with Serbia
- Kosovo president criticises plans for parallel Serb parliament
- Macedonia's new parliament holds constituent session
- VMRO-DPMNE receives mandate to form Macedonian government
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Heading for Europe?
- Vukovic says humanitarian organisations close to al-Qaeda still active in BiH
- UNDP says Albanian businesses have little sense of social responsibility
- Freedom House: Albanian politicians tend to control independent institutions

Russia and its Neighbour

- Belarusian journalists protest media ban
- Russia plans to hold military exercises in Arctic
- Medvedev, like Putin, criticizes US missile plan

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- US praises Turkey's AKP for democratisation efforts
- American politics and Muslim electorate
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Detail of the Report

North/West Europe

Speaking from Austria, the head of the U.N.'s food agency has warned that food prices will remain high and has called for increased production. Food and Agriculture Organization Director-General Jacques Diouf says prices are expected to remain high for reasons including climate change and an expected continuing demand for bio-energy. He also said Wednesday that the problem will not be solved without increasing food production. He called on world leaders meeting in Japan next month to address this issue.

Belgian senator Anne-Marie Lizin, a special envoy on Guantanamo for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said it appeared that the expectation that the next U.S. president would close the facility has fanned "friction" between detainees and their jailers. "For as long as we've known that the two candidates — and all the prisoners know it — are going to close it, it's obvious that the tensions are much more intense," Lizin told reporters at the French Senate where she presented a report Wednesday. Her comments conflicted with an assessment by the detention center's new commander, Navy Rear Adm. David Thomas. He said Tuesday that there was no sign of increased tension among the 270 men held there on suspicion of terrorism or links to al-Qaida or the Taliban. "There are occasional episodes between the guards and the detainees as you would expect, just occasionally, and no spikes," said Thomas, who took command of the prison on May 27. Anne-Marie Lizin has been a regularly visiting the prison though unable to meet with prisoner yet she said her assessment of the prison is based on discussion with military officials at the prison and other impressions at the prison.

In a similar vein a recently released detainee from the US prison in Guantanamo highlighted the stress faced by inmates used as tactics to stress-up inmates and get information from them. Sami al-Haj Al-Jazeera journalist said "They were made into nomads," He provided three reasons for detainees being moved around the prison. "There was a policy of the camp administration to stop the detainees from feeling they were in a stable state, and therefore they kept the detainees in movement all the time, moving them from one camp to the other every week, every two weeks," "In certain camps there was the possibility to speak to each other. It wasn't allowed, but it was possible. It was very much a police tactic to listen to us," al-Haj said. "They knew

that when one is deprived of contact and then one has the possibility to speak to others, one might say things.".....Finally inmates were placed in a cold room and stripped of all clothes except a pair of shorts. Guards would frequently check on the detainees, making them move their limbs "to know you are alive," al-Haj said. "They have the right to check you all the time. So they use this to disturb you, because they need all the people to follow the rules."

The presidency of the European Union held by Slovenia has asked Iran to halt the execution of youth on its death roll. "The Presidency of the European Union deeply regrets that yet another juvenile offender is in imminent threat of execution," the Slovenian EU presidency said in a statement on the case of Selah Taseh. An official of the presidency said Taseh, born in 1992, had been sentenced to death for committing a murder while aged 15. The EU reminds Iran that all juvenile death sentences violated Tehran's international obligations and commitments it had freely undertaken. "Obligations contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child must be fully and unconditionally respected by the Islamic Republic of Iran," it said. The London-based rights group Amnesty International recently listed the Islamic state as the world's second most prolific executioner last year, with at least 317 people put to death. It trailed only China, which carried out at least 470 death sentences, according to Amnesty. Murder, adultery, rape, armed robbery, apostasy and drug trafficking are all punishable by death under Iran's sharia law, practiced since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The EU and several human rights organisations expressed concern over alleged violations of human rights and cases of torture in Turkey. Government reforms have had a positive impact, but reports of torture and inhumane treatment persist, said Ulrike Hauer, undersecretary of the EU delegation of the European Commission in Ankara. Human rights organisations say the number of torture complaints in Turkey climbed from 222 in 2006 to 310 in 2007.

EU agriculture commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel said cash-strapped food buyers should be allowed to buy the less-perfect green bean, wobbly melon or stringy carrots that are not quite up to "grade A" uniformity standards and thrown away. The European Union's farm chief wants the curvy cucumber and other odd-shaped produce, part of proposals to ease market restrictions on fruit and vegetables amid rising food prices. "I don't think the size of the cucumber is so important for consumers, if you can buy at cheaper prices in a high-price market," Euro-skeptics have used the rules to paint the EU as an overbearing bureaucratic body bent on ruining the lives of citizens by trying to ban the curvy cucumber or the straight banana. However her plans face widespread

opposition from EU capitals, many of which want to keep restrictions in place because they feel dropping the classification would confuse consumers.

EU leaders wrapped up a two-day summit Friday (June 20th) saying, "Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) must continue the implementation of the reform process without delay, particularly with a view to fulfilling the objectives and conditions for the transition from the Office of the High Representative to the [EU] Special Representative." The European Council also welcomed the recent signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, describing it as "an important step in that country's European course".

EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn glitters the hope of Croatia-EU accession. The official said that Croatia could complete its accession negotiations with the EU in the autumn of 2009. Speaking at a policy conference dubbed "A Balkan Balance Sheet", Rehn reiterated that Ireland's recent "no" vote during a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty would not affect the negotiating process. He added there would be plenty of time to resolve the EU's institutional crisis by then. France, which assumes the rotating EU presidency on July 1st, has said its goal would be to open all negotiating chapters and close as many as possible, paving the way for the completion of talks next year.

On a related note, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) urged Turkey's Constitutional Court on Monday (June 23rd) to rule in line with European principles regarding a closure case pending against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). In an unusual move, PACE President Luis Maria de Puig called for a session Thursday on the "functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey" in order to discuss the closure case against the AKP. The secularist main opposition party, the Republican People's Party, opposes PACE's planned special session.

The European Commission (EC) is urging Albania to complete its electoral system reforms by September, Dirk Lange, head of the unit for Albania and BiH in the EC Directorate General for Enlargement, said at the 18th meeting of the EC-Albania Consultative Group in Brussels. "By electoral reform, the EC means the approval of the constitutional amendments and completion of the amendments in the Electoral Code, based on as wide political consensus as possible," the Albanian Ministry of European Integration said in a statement. Minister Majlinda Bregu says Albania is close to implementing all requirements needed for electoral and other reforms.

In other news, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe said it will investigate allegations of trafficking in human organs and inhumane treatment in Kosovo. Swiss parliamentary member Dick Marty will prepare a report on accusations made by former chief UN war crimes prosecutor Carla del Ponte. She says the victims of organ trafficking were mostly ethnic Serbs abducted in Kosovo after the 1999 conflict.

In a similar court issue, the Turkish Supreme Court on Tuesday (June 24th) upheld the acquittal of prominent intellectual Fethullah Gulen, who faced charges of forming a terrorist organisation aimed at undermining the secular state. The ruling confirmed the verdict of a lower Turkish criminal court after a seven-year trial. Gulen is considered one of the most influential figures in the Islamic world.

In other news, a Turkish military court banned the media Friday from broadcasting materials related to the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party, well as documents and digital records related to confidential information about cross-border operations in northern Iraq. Prosecutors launched an investigation after a real-time broadcast of classified intelligence material by a local TV channel.

Britain

British passengers and airlines particularly the British Airways were irked by the disruption of flights and businesses caused by the presidential visit of George Bush. BAA, the airport owner, confirmed Tuesday that 32 arrivals and 36 departures, mostly British Airways flights, were canceled June 15, when Bush arrived, and the following day, when he left. BAA had no figures on delays related to the president's visit. The company said Heathrow typically handles 1,300 arrivals and departures per day. "BAA, the airlines and other business partners at Heathrow did everything in their power to minimize disruption at the airport during George Bush's presidential visit," BAA said in a statement. "Despite our best efforts some disruption did occur, for which we apologize to passengers affected." British Airways' chief executive, Willie Walsh, said the disruption was unnecessary. "The decision to allow President Bush and his fleet of aircraft to fly into Heathrow rather than a military base was one all of Heathrow's users could have done without," Walsh said in the airline's employee news letter. "I am also angry that this was allowed."

British lawmakers condemned U.S. diplomats, after they topped a list of embassies refusing to pay the charge for automobile. The list of fees owed by embassies showed that the United States refused to pay the levy 23,188 times between February 2003 and last month. Japan has racked up the second largest amount of outstanding fees, owing more than \$2.6 million. With the congestion charge, drivers must pay \$16 per day to drive in central London during business hours. "This is a perfectly proper charge and the failure to pay such a huge amount is not only extremely discourteous to the people of London and the country as a whole, but is undermining U.K. domestic transport policy," opposition Liberal Democrat lawmaker Norman Baker said in a statement. Meanwhile both Japan and the United States rejected the accusation saying the toll is tax which foreign diplomats are exempted from paying.

The growth of Islamic banking system in the west and across the globe is something to watch. Most importantly it has taken footing in London where the Bank of England has granted approval for the operation of such system and thus given birth to many financial institutions operating Islamic banking "If you want to talk to anyone about Islamic finance, and you're not in the Middle East or Far East, you come to London," Humphrey Percy, head of Bank of London and the Middle East, told the Financial Times. London has the necessary potentials to become the Western hub for Islamic finance. "It has the right time zone for dealing with Asia and the Middle East, a huge talent pool, and a concentration of diverse markets - the stock exchange, futures, metal, oil," Percy, the head of Bank of London and the Middle East, said. "Also, the government and the Bank of England have supported Islamic finance." Over the past five years, the British government has been introducing legislation to nurture Islamic finance. The government has amended finance acts to ensure that Shari`ah-compliant transactions are not exposed to multiple stamp duty tax breaks granted to certain kinds of interest. The government is also planning to issue sovereign Islamic bonds. Another crucial potential for Britain to establish a vibrant Islamic finance sector is its two-million Muslim population.

Britain's most senior Muslim officer is planning a legal action against the Metropolitan Police Commissioner for being humiliated and subjugated by Scotland Yard. Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur complained that "He is not being taken seriously, not spoken to and is being humiliated." Ghaffur's lawsuit follows a similar complaint by a senior Asian officer, Commander Shabir Hussain, against Scotland Yard. Hussain told an employment tribunal that Sir Blair sidelined black and Asian detectives and surrounded himself with a "golden circle" of handpicked favorites. Ghaffur's legal action has won support from the powerful National Black Police Association, reported the Telegraph. "It will be a sad day for the police service if one of the UK's most respected senior ethnic minority police officers is forced to challenge his treatment in court," said the association's president Ali Dizaei. "The negative effect of such an action on recruitment and on trust and confidence in policing, in particular with minority ethnic communities, will be significant and cannot be under-estimated." Dizaei, who is of Iranian origin, had earlier accused Scotland Yard of discrimination after denying him a £95,000-a-year post of Commander, equivalent to the rank of assistant chief constable.

A Muslim asylum seeker in Ireland has been denied a well-deserved award for his volunteer work after asking organizers not to be asked to shake hand with the lady presenting the award. "The judges had decided that someone else should get the award," said Benedicta Attoh, a member of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Inter-culturalism. Alinoor Ahmed Sheikh, a Somali Muslim based in an asylum hostel in Tralee, was to receive an award for his efforts to raise funds for Amnesty International.

Ahead of the ceremony, he asked the Africa Center in Dublin, the organizers, not to be asked to shake the female presenter's hand. Sheikh said he was initially assured by organizers that his request not to shake Attoh's hand would be accommodated because it was based on his religious beliefs. However, five minutes before the prize announcement his name was crossed out and the prize went to an absent volunteer. "I don't think I would have presented his prize if he wouldn't shake my hand because I'm a woman," said Attoh, chairwoman of the Africa Centre's board. According to the 2006 census, Ireland is home to some 33,000 Muslims, making up about 1 percent of its total population.

Tipo Choudhury, deputy secretary of the Islamic Center of Cornwall, said "Racism is showing its ugly head," with a series of Islamophobic attacks against British Muslims of Asian origin. An obscene graffiti defaming Islam and espousing the cause of Cornish nationalism (the movement calling for more autonomous authorities for the county) was splattered across the center walls. A pig's head was also nailed early this month to the center's door and "KKK" - referring to the Ku Klux Klan which is a name given to racist organizations - was painted in red gloss on an outside wall. In a third incident, graffiti featuring far-right nationalist Party BNP slogans was painted on the center walls.

A recent Financial Times opinion poll showed Britain is the most suspicious nation about Muslims. A poll of the Evening Standard also found that a sizable section of London residents harbor negative opinions about Muslims. An earlier British study had accused the media and film industry of perpetuating Islamophobia and prejudice by projecting Muslims as violent, dangerous and threatening people. Meanwhile local MP Andrew George who also doubles as president of the Council for Racial Equality in Cornwall said "(The attacks had) brought shame on us all," Dick Cole leader of Mebyon Kernow, the Party for Cornwall, also denounced the attacks. "(It is) a crude attempt to foster division and intolerance," he said, calling for confronting these racist attacks by all means.

In the UK, despite Muslims' resentment of honoring Salman Rushdie with knighthood by the monarch, the writer of the vast anger-heated literature 'Satanic Verse' slipped into Buckingham Palace on Wednesday to receive a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II. Muslims see the honour as recognition of his blasphemous writing against Islam, although neither the crown nor Rushdie himself sees it in that way. "I really have no regrets about any of my work," he said when asked about his most inflammatory novel. "This is, as I say, an honor not for any specific book but for a very long career in writing, and I'm happy to see that recognized."

Meanwhile on a separate development pro-Republic group questions the public expenditure of the monarchy which according to them is affecting the taxpayers. Republic spokesman Graham Smith said the "She (the Queen) took a day off and went to the horse races and it cost the taxpayers a lot of money," said Republic spokesman

Graham Smith. "We're going to raise serious questions about that. Why are we paying for a day at the races?" The republic further alleged that many of the true costs are hidden.

Palace officials said public spending on the monarchy has increased from 38 million pounds (\$76 million) to 40 million pounds (\$80 million) for the year ending March 31 compared with the year before, but accountants said this was because of rising travel and maintenance costs, not a freespending lifestyle.

In France Mohamed Moussaoui, the new leader of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) outlines his objectives for the Muslim organization which monitors Muslims' affair across France. Among Moussaoui's top priorities is also the issue of training more imams in France. "We want imams who understand the French way of life,"... "In addition to religious knowledge, the imam should be fluent in French and understand French law." There are about 1,200 imams in France and many lead prayers and offer spiritual and practical advice to the faithful with little or no formal training. Thus Moussaoui said among his priorities would also include the appointment of more Muslim prison, army and hospital chaplains. Three-quarters of them are not French citizens and one-third do not speak French. In the same way he wants French mosques to be increased from the present registered 400 which is incomparable to German 2600 mosques. He believes in creating separate cemeteries for Muslims and improving the abattoir for Muslims within France and across Europe.

The French Parliament's upper house, the Senate recently rejected an institutional reform draft Monday (June 23rd) aimed at introducing a referendum on Turkey's EU membership. The lower house approved the measure in late May. Senators, however, criticised it as "abusive" and "discriminatory" towards an "an ally and a friend" of France. President Nicolas Sarkozy opposes Turkey's EU membership, claiming that the country is not located in Europe. Instead of full membership, he backs a "privileged partnership" status for Turkey. Ankara insists on full accession.

A Danish of Palestinian origin believes that there should be a balance between religion and one's hobby. Zainab al-Khatib is part of the Danish national football team covering her body without any objection. She says by observing her Islamic duties and participating in social act would show that Muslims are integrating in the mainstream society.

Southern Europe

Greek authorities arrested three women suspected of belonging to an organ-trafficking group. The suspects a doctor and two businesswomen allegedly duped patients in Greek hospitals into undergoing kidney transplants in India. Each patient paid 60,000 euros. The doctor allegedly insisted the transplants were necessary, though the patients were too ill

to tolerate the procedures. At least ten reportedly died from complications. Police arrested an Indian doctor a few months ago.

Cyprus Agriculture Minister Michalis Polynikis announced that Greece will begin providing water to Cyprus, which is facing a severe drought. The first six tankers carrying about 50,000 cubic metres of water will arrive on Monday. Those shipments are expected to reach 8 million cubic metres by November. Average rainfall totals are 20% lower than normal on the island, which senior Cypriot officials blame on global climate change.

Southeast Europe

The Serbian interior ministry announced a joint operation by Serbian and Montenegrin police has smashed a human-trafficking network. The nearly two-week-long operation followed months of investigation and culminated in the arrests of six Serb citizens. "We have found three victims of the human traffickers -- a Serb girl and two women from Ukraine," the statement said. The ring allegedly talked the women into becoming waitresses and cooks in northern Kosovo's Mitrovica but later forced them into prostitution. Such effort evidently expresses a good neighbourhood-ness and cooperation.

In Serbia, formation of government remains headache as the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) announced on Saturday that it is suspending talks with the Serbian Radical Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia aimed at forming a governing coalition. SPS leader Ivica Dacic says it boiled down to major differences of opinion over Serbia's EU accession. The SPS-led coalition is now considering launching talks with representatives of the For a European Serbia coalition, led by President Boris Tadic's Democratic Party (DS). The DS won the May 11th parliamentary elections, but not by enough to govern alone.

Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica thanked Moscow for preventing the UN Security Council from adopting Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's proposal on handing over UNMIK's authorities in Kosovo to EULEX. "Russia has been consistently defending the UN statutes and the acting Resolution 1244, which guarantees the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia," Serbia has been working along with Russia to halt the independence of Kosovo and more recently the latter helped to halt the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's proposal. The UN aim to shift security responsibility away from UNMIK and also expected to hand over part of its functions to Kosovo authorities and another part to the EU mission, EULEX. It was supposed to assume the duties a week ago, but ran into opposition from Russia and some other members of the UN Security Council. Serbian President Boris Tadic, who attended Friday's session, told Security Council members that Belgrade opposes Ban's plan and would never recognise Kosovo's independence.

Contrastingly Britain has shown interest to give support to Kosovo militarily. Britain will provide financial support to the process that transforms the current Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) into the planned Kosovo Security Force (KSF), British Minister of State for the Armed Forces Bob Ainsworth said during a meeting with KPC Commander Sylejman Selimi in Pristina, Ainsworth predicted the transformation process will go smoothly and announced that London will donate over 7m euros for KPC members who will not be part of the KSF.

Meanwhile in Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu said on June 20th that Kosovo will not launch status new talks with Serbia and would never agree to the secession of its northern part. "Kosovo exists for all of its citizens. This is a multiethnic community with territorial integrity that enjoys international protection," the president said. Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci however noted in Brussels that a pro-European government in Serbia will have a positive influence on his young country. "The closer Serbia gets to the EU, the closer Kosovo Serbs will get to Pristina," Thaci said. The prime ministers of Montenegro and Albania also attended the conference.

In view of last week announcement by the radical Serbs of Northern Kosovo that they will be having their own separate assembly in the North, President Fatmir Sejdiu said the parallel parliament in the north would be part of "illegal structures" that are "not acceptable". "They aim to destabilise Kosovo," Sejdiu told a press conference. As for plans to reconfigure UNMIK, Sejdiu said he fully supports the move and promised to cooperate in the upcoming process.

In Macedonia the new parliament held its constituent session approving the mandates of 114 of the 120 lawmakers. The mandates of the others will be approved later after a repeated vote in some polling stations on June 29th. Trajko Veljanovski from the ruling VMRO-DPMNE was elected parliament speaker. The coalition For a Better Macedonia, which won the most votes in the June 1st snap election, will enjoy an absolute majority with 63 seats. President Branko Crvenkovski has urged the VMRO-DPMNE leader and incumbent Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, whose party won the election to form a new government as the new parliament is convened. Two Muslim ethnic Albania parties contested in the election and one (DUI) is likely to go into coalition with the new VMRO-DPMNE government. Yet the State Election Commission annulled results from the June 15th repeated vote in 12 polling stations due to irregularities. Voting will be held for the third time on June 29th

In Bosnia-Herzegovina Republika Srpska Prime Minister Milorad Dodik told the Slovenian newspaper Delo that the prospect of EU membership is one of the rare

objectives that unite Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats in BiH, despite the expectation the country will be unable to join the Union any time soon. But Dodik also said that it is unacceptable to set conditions on BiH's EU integration process that necessitate reforms to internal relations defined by the Dayton Peace Accord.

BiH Presidency member Zeljko Komsic in his blog highlighted the pros and cons of the recently signed Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU. He argues that "It is up to us to make it work, this agreement, like anything else related to BiH foreign policy." Komsic points out that on the positive side "BiH will be able to export goods to the EU, though they must meet the standards ... of products on the EU market... It is up to us to make it work, this agreement, like anything else related to BiH foreign policy."....."The agreement has 1,000 pages. About 10% of it is textual and normative regulations. The rest is mostly a precise listing of products imported from the EU, the duties of which will fall by 50% once the SAA becomes effective or will completely disappear as of 2009 or 2010."

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Deputy Security Minister Vjekoslav Vukovic told the Banja Luka-based Nezavisne Novine newspaper that some humanitarian organisations that the UN says support al-Qaeda continue to operate in BiH under new names. "We are investigating certain reports and indications that some of these organisations are active in BiH but under different names. The persons who worked in the forbidden organisations are currently heading other organisations, an indicator that they are still active in BiH," Vukovic said. The UN's list of organisations suspected of affiliation with al-Qaeda includes the Al-Furkhan, Al-Harmain and Al-Masjed Al-Aksa humanitarian foundations, Bosnian Ideal Future, the Global Relief Foundation and Taibah International, all of which have offices in BiH.

Businesses in Albania have little or no sense of social responsibility, according to a UNDP-sponsored survey published June 23rd. The report points to the low level of involvement by businesses in terms of donations, social assistance or financial support. "It is important to underline that Albanian companies don't donate money to charity," UNDP representative Marina Kaneti said, adding that state structures must do more.

Similarly the Freedom House reported that Albanian government and political elite tended to control independent state institutions last year. In the report of the Freedom House published on Tuesday (June 24th). The document, called "Nations in Transit", says parties in power control the appointment of officials in these key institutions. The report by the non-profit organisation added that while Albania has a long way to go towards democracy and a market economy, the most serious challenges stem from efforts to reform the justice system and curb corruption.

Russia and its Neighbour

The New York-based Human Rights Watch accuses Russian security forces of being responsible for widespread human rights abuses in the southern province of Ingushetia near Chechnya. In a recent report released, Human Rights Watch said it has documented dozens of summary and arbitrary detentions, acts of torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions committed by security forces combatting insurgents in Ingushetia. There was no immediate comment from Russian authorities, who rarely comment on such allegations. Human Rights Watch urged the Russian government to change what it called "brutal" counterinsurgency policies and punish those responsible for violations in Ingushetia, which the rights group compared to rampant rights abuses during the two wars in neighboring Chechnya. Human Rights Watch said in the report that "dirty war" tactics against insurgents would likely further destabilize the situation in Ingushetia and beyond in the North Caucasus.

Journalists taking advantage of the internet as alternative media from the huge censorship in the print media have launched protest over government action to censor the internet news production. Belarusian journalists filled their pages with grim black banners to protest a new media law that will severely restrict the last source of independent information in the repressive ex-Soviet state. The legislation also forbids all Belarusian media outlets from accepting foreign funding, a restriction that will affect about 30 publications that now receive U.S. or EU money. The new measures require all Internet sites to be officially registered with the government; many independent newspapers that have been closed down by the authorities have taken refuge in cyberspace. The legislation also toughens controls on journalists, who can be imprisoned for two years for reproducing foreign media reports that "discredit Belarus." The bill, which won final approval in the lower house of parliament Tuesday, cracks down on news Web sites, the last remaining sources of uncensored information in this country of 10 million. Many newspapers that have been closed down have found refuge in cyberspace and become the only place for Belarusians to gain access to independent news and analysts. The bill was drafted by President Alexander Lukashenko, authoritarian ruler since 1994. The government argues the Internet must be brought to heel to protect Belarusians from foreign propaganda. "We have to protect society from the negative effects of the Internet," First Deputy Information Minister Liliya Ananich told parliament members Tuesday.

European countries along with North American countries (USA and Canada) are tussling over the ownership of the Arctic region. Russia one of the claimers said it would start a military exercise in the cold region in bid to show its power. Gen. Vladimir Shamanov, in charge of military training at Russia's Defense Ministry, said planning for the exercises began after several nations disputed Russia's Arctic claims and said Russia will conduct military exercises in the Arctic to uphold the country's claim to the region's vast natural

resources. "Modern wars are won or lost long before they start," Shamanov told the military daily *Krasnaya Zvezda* in an interview published Tuesday.

The dispute over who controls what in the Arctic has become more heated with growing evidence that global warming is shrinking polar ice, opening up new shipping lanes and resource development possibilities. Yet in May, representatives from Denmark, Norway, Russia, Canada and the United States met in Ilulissat, 155 miles north of the Arctic Circle, to reaffirm their commitment to international Arctic treaties. Under the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, Arctic nations have 10 years after ratification to prove their claims under the largely uncharted polar ice pack. All countries with claims to the Arctic have ratified the treaty, except for the United States.

During the Russia-EU energy summit held in Siberia, Russian president Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev reiterated the position of his predecessor Vladimir Putin that Russia does not welcome U.S. plan to set up a missile base in Poland and a related radar in the Czech Republic. "We are deeply skeptical of this initiative," Medvedev said of the U.S. plans. "We believe it's harmful and fails to fulfill the task to maintain security on the European continent as well as the global security." Medvedev said he and the EU leaders on Friday discussed his proposal to hold a European summit that could produce a new security pact for the continent. He warned the EU against relying on others to ensure security in Europe — an apparent reference to the United States. "Europe is our own common house and all of us are its landlords, and we must remember to maintain it," he said. "We shouldn't delegate this duty to neighbors. It's also impossible to put one, even very rich, landlord in charge of maintaining the house."

USA/Canada

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that while the secular character of Turkey is important, religion is also a factor. In a speech to a foreign affairs seminar in Washington, Rice praised the efforts of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), noting that unlike other parties, it has reached out to Turkish Kurds. The Constitutional Court is considering whether to shut down the party, for allegedly threatening secularism in Turkey. Thousands of AKP supporters staged a demonstration in Istanbul on Saturday. They say opponents are trying to "stage a coup through the judiciary".

As the United States election run-up progresses certain corner of the US electorates are voicing their concern over the indifference attitude of the democrat nominee. American Muslims are becoming unhappy with Obama's gesture towards them by way of snubbing. In spite the huge support they claim they have offered to the prospective first African-American president. Various Muslim organizations observed that Obama have shown interest to other faiths and visited them during his campaign but for once has not welcome their invitation. However Muslim organizations said they understand the fear of Obama who is tactically avoiding his opponent to use Islamic sentiment against him.

More recently two Muslim ladies were refused of sitting behind Obama during a campaign; the incident has further heightened the tempo of ire of Muslims against Obama, though Obama personally apologized to the two ladies. Obama's latest comment to the Jewish lobby group in Washington that Jerusalem will be an undivided capital of Israel also triggers resentment among Muslims. Upon Muslims and Arab disapproval he retracted that compromises have to be made by both parties in settling the Israel-Arab conflict.

While the run-up for US November election continues, Iraqis are troubled over who will assume the seat of the White House and ultimately change their life. While some Iraqis hold great thrust in Obama others hold some misgiving. "Obama has showed closer feelings towards ordinary Iraqis," Safee, the Baghdad shopkeeper, said. "He understands how important it is for the Iraqi government to stand on its own and how the occupation will just worsen our security situation. "I hope Obama will win and make true all of his promises." Saharawi, the Baghdad University teacher, also believes that Obama represents a better hope in change. "Obama appears to be a trustful man," he says. "We hope Obama can at least bring social equality back to Iraq, withdraw occupation troops and be fair on his statements." Analysts too seem to agree that Obama looks to be a better choice for Iraq. "He shows more credibility and a possible change of ideas and ideals," Mukhaled Ayad, a political analyst from Baghdad University, told IOL. "Obama shows more clearly his intentions to improve life here and to withdraw occupations forces sooner than McCain."

Other Iraqis, however, do not want to be too optimistic about Obama. "I doubt that anyone the two candidates would withdraw the occupation forces from our country," said Ahmed Ibraheem, a trade company owner in Baghdad. "The US government wants to stay in Iraq and it is an enough reason for Obama to change his mind after winning elections."

In the US, a Muslim physicist has planned to sue the Energy Department for discrimination of race and comment over Iraq. The Muslim scientist said he had only said what others have been saying but since he is a Muslim the story turns differently. He has been demoted and his security clearance taken that has made him lost his job.

Oceania

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said that the country did not need to adopt nuclear energy to address climate change. The stance is a clear reversal from the position of the former conservative Howard's government that sees nuclear power as way to combat climate change. "On the question of nuclear, we believe that we have a huge range of energy options available to Australia beyond nuclear with which and through which we can respond to the climate change challenge," Australia currently has only one nuclear

reactor, which is used to produce isotopes for medical research. But it has plentiful uranium deposits and exports about 600 million dollars (570 million US) of the radioactive element a year. Rudd was responding to comments from a high-profile member of his Labor Party, former New South Wales state Premier Bob Carr, urging Australia to use nuclear power until technological advances allow the bulk of the country's energy to come from renewable resources. "There is no other bridging technology to get us from this catastrophic booming of coal and oil into the era of cheap and infinite renewable power," Carr told The Australian newspaper. "We all want to get there, but it's decades off and we need a bridge."

Bringing back Australian troops from Iraq was part of his campaign promises and tool used in ousting former PM John Howard. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was among thousands of people who attended the parade through the northeastern city of Brisbane, where Australian troops from Iraq were welcomed. "Today the Australian nation says thank you to you, the men and women of the Australian Defence Force, for your service in Iraq," Rudd told the troops. "These soldiers went to a troubled part of the world, suffered privations, but rolled their sleeves up and represented us in the great traditions of the ANZACS and the values of modern Australian society," said Brig. Steve Day, commander of the 7th Brigade that served in southern Iraq. The troops who marched Saturday all served in southern Iraq, where the Australians held key security roles and undertook training of Iraqi forces. Just one Australian soldier died in Iraq, in an accidental shooting. About 1,000 Australian troops remain in the Middle East in roles supporting the Iraq occupation. Australia also has about 1,000 troops in Afghanistan.

Australian Muslims are struggling to ensure government legalise plural marriage. They believe Islam sees polygamy as a realistic answer to some social woes like adulterous affairs and lamentable living conditions of a widow or a divorced woman. Meanwhile government insists that polygamy can not be permitted for both legal and cultural reasons. Federal Attorney-General Robert McLelland said "There is absolutely no way that the Government will be recognizing polygamist relationships,"....."They are unlawful and they will remain as such." "That's based on a long tradition," "It's based on the culture of our community and polygamous relationships are entirely inconsistent with that culture and indeed with the law." But Muslim leaders argue that by allowing polygamous marriage, the government would accommodate and protect the rights of Muslims who choose such marriage.

Joy spreads on the faces of Muslims residing in the neighbourhood of Cairns as Judge Keith Dodds passed a ruling allowing Muslim erect their place of worship. "It is in the public interest that persons who choose that faith, just as those who choose any other faith, have access to a safe and reasonably comfortable place of gathering and worship," Muslims applied for the Cairns city council in September 2000 to build a mosque in the

city. An initial approval from the council drew a strong opposition from residents, claiming that the mosque would turn the city into a "hotbed of terrorism".

When the council gave a final approval in May 2007, residents took the issue to the Planning and Environment Court. The residents, being advised not to base their case on religious grounds, claimed the mosque's design does not comply with character provisions in the town plan, and that it would cause heavy traffic in the area.

But the court rejected the claim. "Its footprint is no greater than some of the other development in the street and its height is about the same as a number of higher houses in the street." There are nearly 200 Muslims in Cairns. Australia is home to more than 340,000 Muslims, making up 1.7 percent of its 20-million population, as Islam is the second largest religion after Christianity.

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: July 08, 2008

Europe, North America and Rest of the World

By: Bakare Najimdeen

Period: From 29th June -5th July 2008

Headlines

North/West Europe

- Biofuels behind Soaring Food Prices: WB
- Experts: EU, US must reconsider biofuel policy
- Energy experts puzzled over oil prices
- Europe must end energy dependence on Russia: ex-IEA chief

- G-8 climate scorecard shows US in last
- EU and US are close to pact on terror and privacy
- **Iran Responds to West Nuclear Offer**
- Lisbon Treaty rejection may affect enlargement process in Southeastern Europe

- Top British Judge Backs Shari`ah
- Puppy Ad No Offense: Scottish Muslims
- UK Police "Overlook" Muslim Officers
- UK Muslims Taught to Fly
- Britain bans military wing of Hezbollah
- US: Only 2 rendition flights landed on UK soil

- France's Sarkozy urges Macedonia to resolve name dispute with Greece
- French Terror Laws Flout Rights: HRW

- No Charge for Dutch Anti-Qur'an MP
- Dutch Anti-Qur'an MP Charged in Jordan
- Sweden pays \$500,000 to exonerated terror suspect
- Turkey's AK on Trial

Southern Europe

- Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot leaders agree in principle on single sovereignty
- Cyprus -- Lawmakers ratified the Lisbon Treaty

Southeast Europe

- Djelic predicts EU candidate status for Serbia in December
- Serbia's Tadic urges African Union members to reject Kosovo's independence
- Serbia dismisses vice consul in US for helping suspect flee
- Serbia dismisses second official in United States for helping suspected criminal flee
- Albania joins EU's competitiveness and innovation programme
- Croatia's Sanader says Sarkozy trying to speed up Lisbon Treaty ratification
- Croatia upbeat on NATO membership
- Denmark ratifies Montenegro's SAA
- Montenegrins express broad support for EU, NATO entry
- Kosovo deputy minister dismissed after heated parliamentary debate
- Kosovo Serbs convene parliament; Pristina, international authorities object
- Danish foreign minister denounces parallel institutions in Kosovo
- OSCE urges support for building multiethnic society in Kosovo
- Election rerun in Macedonia goes smoothly
- Macedonia, Kosovo formally start border demarcation
- Bulgaria's ruling party proposes changes to campaign financing, registration guidelines
- Bulgarian president ready to organise referendum on electoral system
- Junior ally supports Bulgarian ruling party's proposal for electoral reform
- Romania's Basescu asks parties to draft strategy to confront rising prices
- Ambassador says US wants to strengthen strategic partnership with Romania
- BiH deputy high representative suggests OHR could close in a year
- Gregorian backs Transparency International BiH in row with Dodik

Russia and its Neighbour

- Russian president criticises Ban over UNMIK restructuring decision
- Russia warns Lithuania on US missile defense
- Russian lawmakers OK US weapons dismantling deal
- Lesson learned, Poles get tough over US missiles
- Medvedev: Russia is not leaving the G-8
- Introducing Ukraine to Muslim Fashion
- Russia warns of "new war" in Abkhazia conflict 23 minutes ago

USA/Canada

- Guantanamo: "Torture Team" in Action, Torture in the Name of War on Terror
 - White House says ruling could free detainees in US
 - Obama says Iraq trip could refine his policy
 - "Conservative" Obama
 - On Iran, top military officer sounds like Obama
 - US Preparing Battlefield With Iran
 - Deficient US Diplomacy
 - Airport Scanners Stripping You Naked
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- Canadians distrust retailers with personal data
 - Business group pushes Harper to back WTO farm deal
 - Small Muslim community builds Canada's biggest mosque

Oceania

- Laws for pope visit rankle critics in Australia
- Pope faces lack of faith in Australia: survey

Detail of the Report

North/West Europe

Contradicting US claims, a confidential World Bank report said that biofuels have caused global food prices to skyrocket by 75 percent, reported the *Guardian* on Friday, July 4.

"Without the increase in biofuels, global wheat and maize stocks would not have declined appreciably and price increases due to other factors would have been moderate," the report said. The report said the production of biofuels has distorted food markets in three main ways. It has diverted grain into fuel, said the report, citing that more than one third of US corn is now used to produce ethanol and about half of vegetable oils in the EU going towards the production of biodiesel. It said the biofuel production has made farmers setting land aside for biofuel production and has sparked financial speculation in grains, driving prices up higher. The report said that food prices rose by 140 percent between 2002 and February 2008. Though the report was drafted in April, it has not been published to avoid embarrassing the Bush administration. "It would put the World Bank in a political hot-spot with the White House," a senior development source told the *Guardian*. Bush has blamed soaring food prices for the high demand from India and China. But the report ridiculed the claim. "Rapid income growth in developing countries has not led to large increases in global grain consumption and was not a major factor responsible for the large price increases."

U.N. officials have called on countries to ensure that biofuel crops do not compete with food crops and do not encourage deforestation. Environmentalists, who once hailed biofuels as a key tool in fighting climate change, now believe their production has encouraged deforestation. The diversion of food crops such as canola, corn, soybeans and sugarcane to biofuels has been blamed as an important factor in the sharp rise in food prices over the past year. Similarly EU agriculture commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel has asked the EU to come to the aid of the developing countries in view of the rising food price. She urges for new financial aid to farmers in developing countries to buy fertilizers and seeds to boost production as fertilizers have shot up twice food prices.

As crude soared to a new record, the head of the International Energy Agency declared that the world was in the grip of an "oil shock," and the president of OPEC acknowledged he could not say whether prices would flatten out or continue to soar. The comments by IEA chief Nobuko Tanaka, OPEC chief and Algerian Energy minister Chakib Khelil and other industry leaders at the 19th World Petroleum conference reflected the concern surrounding record oil prices that seem ready to spike higher. An IEA report released at the conference confirmed what most consumers fear: that supplies of oil will remain tight, whether for cooking fires in the poorest countries or powering cars and cooling or heating homes in the richest. And that's despite record prices and reduced demand as costly crude dampens the world's oil hunger. "We are clearly in the third oil price shock," declared Tanaka, comparing the effects to periods of soaring prices in the 1970s and 1980s. But he suggested there is less of a likelihood of a quick fix this time. "Those price peaks forced consumers into saving oil" and oil companies to look for new wells, said

Tanaka, but now "the biggest energy savings have been made (and) ... the easy oil outside (of) a few countries has been found."

IEA observation tallies with the U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson warning that oil prices are likely to prolong the world economic slowdown. "I think that the oil prices are a strong head wind and at this level, they have got a high risk that they are going to prolong the slowdown," Paulson said at a London news conference as oil traded near the new record reached above \$145 a barrel. Paulson held talks with British Treasury chief Alistair Darling, both Paulson and Darling warned that the United States and Britain urgently need to reduce their dependence on oil, cut foreign energy imports and promote investment in renewable alternatives.

In the same connection to energy, the former head of the International Energy Agency told EU ministers during an energy summit that the European Union should free itself from its dependence on Russian gas by developing renewable and nuclear energy. Claude Mandil told the European bloc's 27 energy ministers at an informal meeting "We need to give ourselves a flexibility that we are missing," "We need more energy efficiency, more liquefied natural gas, more renewable energy, more nuclear energy," We are horrified at the thought that there might be lack of Russian gas, that we won't be able to get it, and at the same time we are being very aggressive verbally to Russia..... "Let's stop provoking Russian sovereignty, claiming that we can dictate Russian behaviour on energy on their own territory,"

A Dutch consulting company commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund and insurer Allianz SE issued out a scorecard compiled by Ecofys, that most of the industrialist nations are doing much as expected of them in solving global climate change. The Scorecard however ranked Britain as the developed nation that has done the most to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and reach targets set by the Kyoto Protocol. France and Germany are close behind. Germany was praised for its investment in renewable energy. "But all three countries are at best half as far along the road as they should be," The scorecard sees US doing the least and hope that the Congress will soonest passed a bill to that effect.

The EU and the United States are close to agreeing on how to protect personal and private data but still allow law enforcement officials to share information to fight organized crime and terrorism. Eighteen months of closed-door talks between European and American officials have already led to agreement on key protection principles for data-sharing, according to Jonathan Faull, director of the European Commission's justice and interior affairs department. Faull told reporters Wednesday that formal talks could begin later this year with a final binding deal reached in 2009. The agreement aims to end criticism from privacy advocates and EU officials who have called for more guarantees that European privacy rights are respected by U.S. authorities as they seek access to more data from Europeans for security purposes. European and U.S. data privacy rules differ widely and have clashed in recent years over specific deals reached to transfer data taken from passengers flying to the United States and on banking and financial data transfers. "We have reached a certain measure of common agreement on principles," Faull said, but

added the pact would not give a blank check to U.S. or European police authorities to snoop into e-mails, bank accounts, credit card details or telephone records across the Atlantic.

The Iranian government responded to the letter and demand of the west asking it to halt its nuclear programme for better incentives. Top nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili said "The Islamic republic has prepared and presented a response to the letter of the six countries with a constructive and creative view and a focus on common ground,". It was quite surprising that Iran responded to the western letter a day after the US and its allies have vowed no more economic sanctions if Tehran keeps enriching uranium at current levels as reported by *The Daily Telegraph*. The daily said the West has offered Tehran to be allowed to operate 3,000 centrifuges without incurring more sanctions. Tehran will enjoy the full package of economic and technical benefits, together with the lifting of existing sanctions, if it completely stops enriching uranium.

The Irish rejection of the Lisbon treaty is creating fear from some EU aspirants although the EU enlargement officer Olli Rehn said more specifically to Croatia that the rejection will not affect its accession. It is true that three candidate countries Macedonia, Turkey and Croatia are most interested in what will happen after the Irish veto. Croatia and Turkey are in the process of negotiations for entering the EU, while Macedonia is waiting to start talks. All of the Western Balkan countries, except Montenegro, have signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, which is viewed as the first step towards Union accession.

The main impact of the Irish vote on enlargement may be to reinforce those who argue that Turkey is too large and culturally different to join the bloc. According to French Agriculture Minister Michel Barnier, the referendum showed that citizens were afraid of an EU "without borders and limits". Still, on June 18th, the accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey moved on to include the areas of corporate law and intellectual property law. Croatia, well advanced in the process with prospects for opening more and more negotiating chapters of the European common law, is expected to conclude its negotiations next year. The EU and Croatia also opened two new chapters in the accession negotiations after the failure of the treaty in Ireland. The talks between the EU and Croatia have gone ahead by including freedom of movement for workers, as well as social policy and employment. Macedonia is waiting to open negotiations this autumn. The move will depend on its internal political developments after its poorly organised June 1st elections and the fate of the Lisbon Treaty itself.

Britain

Britain's most senior judge has suggested that Islamic Shari`ah could play a role in the British legal system, echoing a similar stance by the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams. Lord Chief Justice Lord Nicholas Phillips said in a speech to the London Islamic Council "There is no reason why principles of Shari`ah law, or any other religious code, should not be the basis for mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution," "It must be recognized however that any sanctions for a failure to comply

with the agreed terms of the mediation would be drawn from the laws of England and Wales." The Lord Chief Justice said that the Islamic Shari`ah has been widely misunderstood. "Part of the misconception about Shari`ah law is the belief that Shari`ah is only about mandating sanctions such as flogging, stoning, the cutting off of hands or death for those fail to comply with the law. "In some countries the courts interpret Shari`ah law as calling for severe physical punishment. There can be no question of such courts sitting in this country, or such sanctions being applied here." The bottom-line argument is that parties in a case can decide to settle their dispute in accordance to agreeable law that suits them.

In a small town in Scotland, Muslims became angry over a puppy advertisement. The controversy erupted on Monday, when Mohammed Asif, the Muslim councillor of Dundee city, expressed reservations over a postcard advertising the new non-emergency phone number of the police in the eastern coast region of Tayside. Asif, also a member of the Tayside Joint Police Board, said the ads, already distributed throughout the region, could be offending to Muslims. The ad pictured a dog sitting in a police hat and telephone on a card highlighting the police force's new contact number.

But Scottish Muslim leaders dismissed the counsellor's comments, affirming that religious sensitivity has nothing to do with a picture a dog. Osama Saeed, chief executive of the Scottish-Islamic Foundation (SIF), told *The Scotsman* on Wednesday, July 2. "There isn't any Islamic basis for taking issue with a simple picture of a little puppy,"..... "This seems to be a complaint based on culture rather than religion," A member of Dundee-based Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies agreed with Saeed that "Dogs can be used to hunt or farm, or even as guide dogs for the blind,"...."I would not say a picture of a dog is offensive, but people have different sensibilities and different limits." However the police have resolved to scrap the dog promotion. "We did not seek advice from the force's diversity adviser prior to publishing and distributing the postcards,"... "That was an oversight and we apologize." a spokesman for the Police force said.

The audit made by the Demos think-tank and the National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP), traced the treatment of officers of ethnic minorities in 43 police forces. The audit discovered that Muslim officer either Asian or Black is discriminated against within the police force. According to the audit Muslim officers in Scotland Yard are being routinely discriminated against, being overlooked in promotion and are "entirely absent" from specialist operations. "Muslim officers are being overlooked, potentially discriminated against in promotion, or are failing to receive the necessary training and personal development that would allow them to rise through the ranks,"

The result of the audit was sent to the Home Secretary for adjustment of the situation, the audit asked Home Secretary Jacque Smith "Why were some forces unable or unwilling to co-operate, while others completed in full and on time,"..... "Why did some forces refuse to complete on grounds of the pretext of the Data Protection Act, while others said

they did not have the time to take part?" "If the police are serious about ensuring that Muslim officers are able to rise through the ranks at the same speed as their fellow white officers, and ensuring that Muslims are deployed to counter-terrorism duties at a time of heightened national security, we must have reliable data to track progress and measure success. "The 'paucity' of information 'means that each individual case of discrimination, or alleged discrimination, can only be assumed to be symptomatic of the conditions facing Muslim officers across the UK." It is believed that such claim along with the Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur allegation if goes to court would further have a toll on Britain Muslim Community.

The event of 9/11 and 7/7 obviously had a great impact on Muslim living in both US and Europe, it shattered the aim of young Muslims wanting to be a pilot or fly an airplane for so doing will be welcomed with misgiving. Rozaidah Abd Rahman took a flight lesson and flies a plane under the project, titled Festival of Flight, which is also organized by the Islamic Society, Federation of Students of Islamic Societies and Heartstone group, which builds understanding across different nationalities, aims to teach students aviation skills and construction of aircraft. Abd Rahman told the *Manchester Evening News* "I really had the time of my life," "Flying was definitely an experience that I would not trade for anything in the world." "It was just an amazing feeling when I was up in the sky. You get a different kind of excitement and a sense of freedom to go where ever you want to go," Abd Rahman is among a group of British Muslims taking part in an aviation project organized by the University of Salford. A recent *Financial Times* poll found that the 7/7 terrorist attack and the recent failed plots have hardened attitudes towards Muslims living in Britain. It found that Britons view Muslims with more suspicion than do Americans or Europeans. "This festival uses the theme of flight to open up their eyes, create a forum through which different people can who would otherwise not come together can meet and exchange ideas and experiences," said Abd Rahman. "Festival of Flight will continue to give more opportunities like this to aspiring Muslim youth who have the passion, not just to fly but also to achieve their dreams in any other walk of life."

On a separate development the British government announced its ban and labelling of the military arm of Hezbollah. The group military arm was enlisted among the terrorist group list of the British government, though nothing was said of its political and humanitarian arms.

Human rights campaigners rejected the new assurances and accused the U.S. and Britain of a trans-Atlantic cover-up over rendition. Miliband said he had asked U.S. officials to examine a list of 391 flights highlighted by human rights groups and lawmakers, after the U.S. acknowledged in February that it had been wrong in its previous assurances. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said then that two suspects had been on flights to Guantanamo Bay and Morocco in 2002 that stopped to refuel on Diego Garcia, a British island in the Indian Ocean that hosts a U.S. military base. She acknowledged Britain had previously been told that no such flights had passed through U.K. territory. Miliband said in a written statement to lawmakers that his list of 391 other flights had now been checked over by U.S. officials and turned up no new cases. "The United States

Government confirmed that, with the exception of two cases related to Diego Garcia in 2002, there have been no other instances in which U.S. intelligence flights landed in the United Kingdom" or overseas territories, he said in the statement. "This remains a trans-Atlantic cover-up of epic proportions," said Reprieve director Clive Stafford Smith. "While the British government seems content to accept whatever nonsense it is fed by its U.S. allies, the sordid truth about Diego Garcia's central role in the unjust rendition and detention of prisoners in the so-called 'war on terror' cannot be hidden forever."

French President Nicolas Sarkozy is urging Macedonia to intensify efforts to resolve its long-standing name dispute with Greece. According to media reports Wednesday (July 2nd), he sent a letter to his Macedonian counterpart, Branko Crvenkovski, assuring him that France supports Macedonia's bid to join NATO as soon as the country fulfils all the necessary criteria. He added the name issue should stop being an obstacle to Macedonia's NATO and EU integration. Greece, supported by France, vetoed Macedonia's bid for NATO membership in April over the name dispute. France now holds the presidency of the EU a six-month rotational post.

Human Right Watch has again question the judicial and criminal justice employed in France has done recently in Russia. The human right group observed that France is arresting people with minimal evidence and over detaining them for days without consultation with lawyers and even if the latter is consulted he has little or no knowledge of the offence of his client. "Terrorism suspects can be held for up to six days in police custody,""Suspects can only see a lawyer after three days of police questioning, undermining the right to an effective defense and putting detainees at risk of ill-treatment...."When they do finally see a lawyer, the visit is limited to 30 minutes and the lawyer usually knows almost nothing about the reason for the arrest."

Judith Sunderland, Europe and Central Asia researcher at HRW said "The breadth of the terrorism association offence can lead to a conviction based on a low standard of proof and weak evidence such as that suspects know each other, are in regular contact, or share particular religious and political beliefs....."Using the criminal justice system is the right way to fight terrorism,"....."But prosecuting people because of who they know and what they think sacrifices basic rights, and that is wrong in principle and dangerous in practice." Meanwhile France prides itself on having the most effective anti-terrorist system in Europe. The country has a team of specialist magistrates operating in close contact with the intelligence services. France has not suffered a terrorist attack since 1996 but authorities say they have foiled a number of plots. HRW warned that the French approach risked alienating Muslims, radicalizing individuals and eroding trust in law enforcement and security authorities.

Dutch Chief Public Prosecutor Leo de Wit said in a statement, reported Reuters, "That comments are hurtful and offensive for a large number of Muslims does not mean that

they are punishable," But the prosecution, however, said that Wilders' actions were allowable under Dutch law and that there were no grounds for prosecuting him for inciting hatred. "Freedom of expression fulfils an essential role in public debate in a democratic society. That means that offensive comments can be made in a political debate," prosecutors said in their statement. "Politicians need to have room to voice their opinions." Wilders, the leader of the right-wing Freedom Party which has nine seats in the 150-member parliament, is infamous for his anti-Islam stances. He has compared Qur'an to Mein Kampf, which outlines Hitler's racist ideology, and has also called for banning the Muslim holy book from the Netherlands.

Only a day after the Dutch prosecution declined to prosecute far-right MP Geert Wilders, Jordan's justice authorities charged Wilders on Tuesday, July 1, with blasphemy and violation of publishing laws for his offensive anti-Qur'an film. "Wilders has been summoned to appear before the court," Tarek Hawamdeh, a lawyer for a group of some 30 Jordanian media outlets which filed a lawsuit with the Amman prosecutor against Wilders. "He will be given 15 days to comply; otherwise, an arrest warrant might be issued through the Interpol." The Jordanian move was approved by OIC as the latter also felt discontent with the Dutch ruling. "The act of the Dutch Public Prosecutor to drop the charges against the producer of the film 'Fitna' is tantamount to encouraging irresponsible media persecution, and nursing grudge against Muslims," the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) said in a statement on Tuesday.

The Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights representing Muhammed Alzery over wrongful deportation has won a compensation of 3 million kronor (\$502,000) from Sweden. Sweden Chancellor of Justice Goran Lambertz said the Swedish state reached a settlement with Muhammed Alzery's lawyers on compensating him for circumstances of his deportation. "He was deported from Sweden by the security police under circumstances that were not acceptable," Lambertz said. Alzery was deported from Sweden to Egypt in 2001 where he claimed he was tortured but freed in 2003 when Egyptian authority dismissed allegations against him. Helsinki Committee said "It is thereby clarified that Sweden has a responsibility for this and it would not be out of place if Fredrik Reinfeldt (Sweden's prime minister) apologized on behalf of Sweden for the harm they caused,"

The ruling AKP of Turkey continues to await ruling by the supreme court of the country over the allegation that it is on track towards anti-secular agenda. AKP have rejected all allegations as being based on newspaper items that carries no substance. The state prosecutor wants the court to band the party (AKP) as well as its 71 politicians for five years, this according to analysts will put Turkey in trouble in many respects. In expectation of a ruling by August of September on the banning of AKP, "All parties are

getting ready for it. If the ruling comes in August or September we could have elections in November." Many analysts predict that if the party is banned, most of its members are expected to regroup under a different name. A public poll published in the Milliyet newspaper on Monday showed that the majority of Turks do not favor banning AK and that it is still the most popular party in the country. Experts say that secularists have spelled dim prospects for Turkey by seeking to ban AK. "These guys (secularists) miss the picture," Ibrahim Kalin, director of Ankara-based political think-tank SETA, told Reuters. "The whole system will be damaged by a court closure...and polarization in Turkey will get deeper."

Southern Europe

President Demetris Christofias of the Greek Cypriot community and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat agreed in principle on single sovereignty and common citizenship for the future Turkish-Greek federation envisioned to resolve the island's long-standing division. Agreement on the key issue came during a meeting in Nicosia, said UN envoy Taye-Brook Zerihoun. Talat and Christofias agreed to meet on July 25th to prepare for new direct talks on reuniting the island. Negotiations were to begin in June but were delayed by disagreements on key issues such as property, sovereignty and citizenship within the proposed bi-zonal, bi-communal federation.

Cyprus Lawmakers ratified the Lisbon Treaty, the document that streamlines the workings of the enlarged EU. By a vote of 31 to 17 with one abstention, Cyprus became the 20th EU member state to ratify the treaty. The ruling Communist Party voted against ratification, arguing European citizens didn't have enough input in the treaty's final preparation. To take effect on January 1st 2009, it must be ratified by all 27 EU member states.

Southeast Europe

The political tussle between the pro-EU and the radical Serb parties in Serbia prevents the formation of a new cabinet for so long a time. Although recent news report tells of a new cabinet is very close owing to the fact that the pro-European coalition led by President Boris Tadic's Democratic Party will have a majority in the new cabinet and that might also give Serbia EU candidature as predicted by Deputy Prime Minister Bozidar Djelic. He added he expects the EU to remove entry visas for Serbian tourists and for short business visits by the end of the year.

Serbia continues to grapples with the self independent declaration of Kosovo and intends to extend the scope of the argument. President Boris Tadic is asking African countries not to recognise Kosovo's independence. Addressing the African Union summit Monday

(June 30th) in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh, Tadic said Serbia plans to bring its dispute with Kosovo before the International Court of Justice. He asked African countries to support Serbia's bid to get UN permission to address the court in September. He said Africa is familiar with secession and separatist conflicts and that the Kosovo case might set a precedent. Only three African countries have recognised Kosovo's independence so far: Senegal, Burkina Faso and Liberia.

Serbia might yet find itself in another hot water with the USA over a case of a Serb criminal illegally extradited from the USA. Serbia foreign ministry has dismissed both Serbian consul general Slobodan Nenadovic and Serbian Vice Consul US Igor Milosevic to the United States after an investigation determined that both helped Serbian national Milan Kovacevic indicted for attempted murder in Binghamton, New York leave the US by issuing him an illegal emergency passport. The ministry has launched further disciplinary action against Milosevic. New York's two senators, Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton, insist that Serbia arrest Kovacevic and extradite him back to the US. Miladin Kovacevic, a 20-year-old Binghamton University basketball player. In May, he allegedly nearly beat a fellow student to death after a row in a bar in New York

Albania joined the EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Programme on (June 27th). The memorandum of understanding through which the country joined the entrepreneurship and innovation pillar of the 3.6 billion-euro programme, was signed by European Commission Vice President responsible for enterprise and industry, Guenter Verheugen, and Albanian Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy, Genc Ruli. Albania is the fifth country in the group of EU candidates and potential candidates to join the programme.

Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader said he believes that French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who said there will be no further EU enlargement without Lisbon Treaty ratification, sought to accelerate the ratification process by making such a statement. France assumed the rotating EU presidency earlier this week. In an interview for a local TV station, Sanader said he thinks that mentioning Croatia in this context is a method of warning the nations that support Croatia's accession to speed up Lisbon Treaty ratification. Sanader added he remains certain of the final outcome: EU membership for Croatia. The latter is heavily disturbed by the weeks ago referendum in Ireland that rejected the Lisbon treaty and that might affect any immediate enlargement.

Croatian Deputy Prime Minister Damir Polancec signalled that in addition to security benefits, Croatia will enjoy significant economic benefits from next year's NATO membership. Speaking at an international conference on NATO entry in Zagreb, Polancec said he expects membership to boost foreign investment and foster economic growth. "Potential investors will feel more secure now when they decide to invest in Croatia. It is of particular importance, as we want to attract more greenfield investors than was the case in the past, when we had very few,"

As part of the steps towards EU membership, prospective country has to sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU. Montenegro who recently

signed the agreement was made happy as Denmark announced that it has ratified Montenegro's Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU, signed on October 15th 2007. The country thus becomes the sixth EU member to ratify Montenegro's SAA after Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary, Austria, and Bulgaria.

Still in Montenegro a recently released poll suggests that 73% of Montenegrin citizens support their country's bid to gain EU membership, and 51% support NATO entry. According to the survey by the Centre for Monitoring, nearly two-thirds of respondents believe that joining NATO would facilitate EU entry. Yet most people failed to name a more concrete benefit the country would gain from NATO membership

Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci sacked Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Naser Osmani saying the constitution permits him to change members of government without parliamentary approval. The decision followed a heated debate in parliament between Osmani and Transport and Telecommunications Minister Fatmir Limaj, a vice president of Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo, over the Kosovo Procurement Supervision Authority. In particular, Osmani argued that Limaj had no right to speak on behalf of the government. The debate deteriorated into an exchange of insults. Limaj and Osmani are members of the two main parties forming Kosovo's coalition government (LDK). Meanwhile Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu of the LDK said he supported Thaci's decision to dismiss Osmani for exchanging offensive comments.

As anticipated, Kosovo Serbs in the northern part of the divided town of Mitrovica formed their own parliament on Saturday (June 28th). It will not have a legislative role but will gather representatives of the Serb community from 26 municipalities in Kosovo. The Radical Party will have 17 members. Outgoing Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) will have 13, while four members will represent the Socialist Party and one will represent the Citizens League. Serbian President Boris Tadic's Democratic Party (DS) will have three members, and G17 Plus will have one representative. Representatives of the Goran, Roma and Bosniak communities obtained seats too. However, representatives of the DS and G17 Plus, the parties that will form the new government in Belgrade, did not attend the session.

The assembly has however been condemned by the head of the National Serb Council, Rada Trajkovic, opposed its creation. "This is not useful for Kosovo Serbs," she said. The Kosovo government and international agencies criticised the assembly. President Fatmir Sejdiu said "Through this parliament, Serbia aims to destabilise Kosovo."

In other development Pieter Feith, head of the International Civilian Office in Kosovo, stressed the importance of the EU police and judicial mission EULEX deploying across all of Kosovo. Feith, who held a joint news conference with President Fatmir Sejdiu after a meeting of the International Steering Group for Kosovo, said he hopes EULEX will deploy quickly in the Serb-dominated north but declined to give a time frame. He also reiterated that as far as the international community is concerned, the newly established Serb parliament in northern Kosovo has "no legal effect".

Similarly the Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moller said in Pristina that there should be no parallel Serb institutions in Kosovo and that any separation of Kosovo would be unacceptable. Moller, who met with Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, said the supervised independence plan by former UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari provides sufficient guarantees for the Serb minority in Kosovo in terms of preserving its culture, language and heritage.

For its part, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement Tuesday describing the establishment of a Kosovo Serb parliament as a logical reaction to the "illegal" unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo. "The assembly ... reflects the prevalent feeling within that community that it must confront [its] forced integration into the illegal Kosovo Albanian creation," the statement said.

What might appear as recognition of the self declared independent Kosovo was the acknowledgment of OSCE to support Kosovo in building a multiethnic and tolerant society. In an address to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Annual Session in Kazakhstan's capital, OSCE Secretary-General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut said the OSCE will support democratic processes in Kosovo and would aim to build strong local self-government structures to share OSCE values.

While in a separate news the Kosovo Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Fatmir Limaj officially requested Kosovo be granted an international telephone code and an internet domain. Limaj told an economic forum in Monaco that the move would facilitate international communications with Kosovo. Meanwhile, a new poll by the OSCE finds that that KFOR is the most trusted institution in Kosovo, followed by the Kosovo Police Corps. Respondents expressed the most distrust in the judiciary. Pollsters conducted the survey late last year, before Kosovo declared independence.

In Macedonia, the second election rerun in 15 polling stations Sunday wrapped up peacefully and without violations, says State Elections Commission Chairman Jovan Josifovski. Authorities re-staged the balloting in a number of Albanian-populated villages where violence and irregularities marred two earlier rounds. If no challenges emerge, officials will certify the results. On Sunday, EU Ambassador to Skopje Erwan Fouere said the election "took too long". During a visit Friday, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Rosemary DiCarlo said Macedonia should quickly form a new VMRO-DPMNE-led government and proceed with implementation of its Euro-Atlantic integration reform agenda. At a press conference with DiCarlo, Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki said he expects the new government to be formed within two weeks, with the participation of at least one ethnic Albanian party.

Macedonia and Kosovo posted a triangular sign on June 30th to mark the formal start of demarking their 150km-long bilateral border. Macedonia's northern border with Kosovo has never been officially delineated since the former Yugoslav republic gained independence in 1991. Macedonia and Kosovo formed a joint committee on the issue in March, shortly after Kosovo declared independence from Serbia. The demarcation continues over the summer, with the pace depending on weather conditions in the

mountainous terrain, Macedonian Foreign Ministry spokesman Vasko Andonovski said. He added that workmen delineated 12km on Monday. "This is a joint process ... and we expect it will be solved in the best way possible," Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu said on Monday. Officials in Pristina say that recognition of Kosovo's independence is necessary and must precede demarcation. However, the Macedonian government required the demarcation first.

In Bulgaria, the ruling Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) unveiled plans to propose a package of measures to beef up financial requirements for participation in general elections. The BSP wants the registration fee raised from 10,000 euros to 25,000 euros, which parties would forfeit if they win less than 1% of the vote. Parties would also have to prove they have regional structures that extend over at least two-thirds of the country. Parallel to that, the state subsidy would rise threefold to reduce parties' dependence on suspect outside funding. In addition, the BSP wants parties that failed to win at least 2% in the past two general elections removed from the registry. The BSP acknowledges it must co-ordinate the proposals with its ruling coalition partners.

Similarly Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov said he may initiate a referendum on introducing a majority voting element to the electoral system. He urged parliament to schedule a referendum on the issue and suggested that he might launch a petition to that end. Parvanov has previously suggested that a limited number of MPs possibly 30 out of 240 could win seats through a majority vote. Another proposal he backs would introduce preferential voting, which would allow voters to rearrange the order of candidates on party tickets. The junior government coalition ally, the National Movement for Stability and Progress (NDSV) announced its support for the new government proposal.

The Romanian President Traian Basescu summoned representatives of all parties in parliament to discuss how to confront rising prices and limit their effect on the public's purchasing power. At the meeting, Basescu urged the parties to "show the utmost responsibility" in finding a solution to ease the effects of hikes in food and fuel prices, caused mostly by external factors. He also warned against imposing any populist solutions in light of the upcoming general elections this autumn. He says these remedies could adversely affect Romania's medium- and long-term prospects.

US Ambassador to Romania Nicholas Taubman said his country is determined to strengthen its strategic partnership with Romania. In a statement marking the July 4th US Independence Day, Taubman said co-operation is not limited to the defence and military sectors, as US companies such as Ford and Emerson have opened factories in Romania this year. Taubman also congratulated Romanian authorities on their organisation of the NATO summit in Bucharest in April and thanked Romania for its contribution to international peacekeeping efforts

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Deputy High Representative Raffi Gregorian signalled that if BiH continues the current pace of reforms and fulfils the five conditions and two additional requirements set by the Peace Implementation Council (PIC), the Office of the High Representative (OHR) could close in a year. He rejected media speculation that

additional conditions, including constitutional reform, would join the list. Gregorian noted that while experts have recommended constitutional reform to direct future reform efforts, it is not a condition for the OHR's closure. He repeated that the time frame depends entirely on BiH politicians. The OHR was to end its mission in July 2007, but PIC members decided that the lingering political turmoil surrounding police restructuring and constitutional reforms left BiH unable to govern itself. In February, the PIC imposed the five conditions for shutting down the OHR.

Still in BiH, the transparency international is having problem with certain people in the country as the watchdog NGO Transparency is accused of witch-hunting. Deputy High Representative Raffi Gregorian expressed his support for the corruption watchdog NGO Transparency International BiH. Earlier this week, Republika Srpska (RS) Milorad Dodik said he was aware of malpractice on the part of TI BiH, including the racketeering and blackmailing of certain RS businessmen. Gregorian met with TIBH representatives and said afterwards the organisation "has never been contacted by police, questioned or served any notice by the courts. There have been repeated announcements by representatives of the RS government of legal action against the organisation which has never resulted in concrete action. If anyone believes that there is a civil or criminal case to be answered, it should be done through the courts, and not public statements."

Russia and its Neighbour

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev criticised UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his unilateral decision to reconfigure UNMIK, thus allowing a broader role for the EU police and judicial mission dubbed EULEX. In an interview on his official internet site Thursday Medvedev said he believes Ban exceeded his authority. "At a minimum, these are decisions that the secretary-general must not take on his own. They must be taken by the UN Security Council. And it's quite strange when the Security Council hasn't made any pronouncement but the secretary-general speaks out on the issue". He reiterated Russia's view that Kosovo's independence sets a dangerous precedent that will trigger separatist movements around the world.

The Russian Duma (Lower Assembly) unanimously agreed to deploy more troops to its Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad if Lithuania offers its soil for the deployment of U.S. missile interceptors. The development came up upon the fear that if Poland rejects the US missile offer, Lithuania might welcome it. Poland has however demanded increased U.S. military aid in exchange for approving the deal.

The same House equally voted 336-9 with four abstentions to approve two protocols to the 1992 U.S.-Russian agreement on safe transportation, storage and disposal of weapons. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak said the U.S. aid under that agreement has totaled more than \$2 billion and Russia expects to receive another \$1 billion through 2013 to help dismantle its aging arsenals. "The agreement is in the interests of the Russian Federation," Kislyak said. "It allows us to save significant budget funds." The

1992 agreement was signed at a time when the cash-strapped Russian government desperately needed foreign aid to safely store and dispose of huge Soviet-era arsenals of nuclear and chemical weapons. While surging oil prices have reversed Russia's economic fortunes, Moscow has continued to receive aid from the U.S. and other Western nations for its weapons dismantling programs.

The proposed US missile system in Poland and the Czech Republic has struck the rock in view of public resentment to the system. In spite of the Poland-US relations and the support of the former in Iraq, many Polish politicians are becoming wary of the US. Polish businessmen got little or no contract in Iraq, hence for any missile system in Poland, it has asked for billions of dollars worth of military investment from the U.S. to upgrade its air defenses, including Patriot ground-to-air missiles. As a result, Warsaw has decided that if it is going to link its fate to another major American military project, it's going to get what it wants beforehand and in writing.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev dismissed Sen. John McCain, the Republican Party's presidential candidate call for Russia to be booted from the G-8. Medvedev said: "It's completely obvious that any kind of thesis about the exclusion of Russia appears simply unserious. The world 'eight' exists not because someone likes it or dislikes it, but because it is objectively the largest economies and the most serious in terms of foreign politics." One of the strongest international criticisms of Russia under Putin — and the core of McCain's belief that Russia should be out of the G-8 — is that the Kremlin has stifled opposition and democracy. Medvedev said he supports competitive politics, "but it must be rational. This is competition built on the basis of law." "The system that was built on one party having the right to truth showed its weakness 20 years ago," he said, referring to deterioration of the Soviet Union.

Olga Kokalits a Ukrainian Muslim designer participated in a fashion display where she showcased Muslim women attires that cover the whole body saved for the eyes and hands. She was taken by surprise by the warm welcome from the audience and judges. "I was surprised to see the audience showing great interest in my creations,""I was more pleased to see people rushing to purchase and order my designs." Kokalits' designs received praise from the judging committee with the Muslim designer qualifying for the finals. She finally ranked third among the top 20 stylists. Ukrainian Muslim leaders extolled the Muslim stylist as a role model. "Kokalits is a model of confident Muslim women who are determined to show Islam's face of modernity," Ismail Al-Kadi, President of the umbrella Federation of Social Organizations in Ukraine (Arraid). Kadi believes Kokalits sets an example with her experience. "Her participation and success in this competition shows that Islam can be compatible with all aspects of life." "We are always encouraging Muslims to integrate into the society in order to promote Islam as a religion of peace, coexistence and tolerance." Ukraine is home to some two million Muslims making up 5% of the overall 46-million population.

The Russian Defense Ministry warns of an imminent war in Abkhazia owing to the new tension growing between Abkhazia and Georgia. A "new war" could break out in Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia if Tbilisi uses military force to resolve the conflict, Russia's Defense Ministry said. Separatist leader Sergei Bagapsh accused Georgia on Saturday of planning to take over the region by force earlier this year, though the operation did not come to fruition. "Such plans by Tbilisi can only be seen as yet another step towards further escalating the tensions in the region, which will bring the conflict into a new war,"

USA/Canada

Philippe Sands' book *Torture Team*, was reviewed by Fahad Faruqi on Islamonline. The book appears to reiterate the assertion that was recently expressed that top Bush administration officers were closely responsible for the tough interrogation techniques employed at the Gitmo prison in Cuba. The book like every other previous report shows that Donald Rumsfeld the ex-Defence Secretary was responsible for the approval of the techniques and more astonishingly was the approval of lawyers who are supposed to determine right interrogation techniques from wrong. The book also points to the fact that Bush tried as much as possible to manipulate the situation and bend rules which became contrary to the Geneva convention on rule of POW, which Bush do not see any likelihood with the al-Qaeda terrorist suspects in Gitmo prison. It was the assertion of the book that a country like the United States that claims democracy and human rights can also stand for such unhealthy, torture in the name of war on terror.

The White House is yet to wrestle with the decision of the Supreme Court couple of weeks back that detainees held at the Gitmo prison have right to appeal in USA courts. The White House felt that this would bring the possibility of freeing hard criminals walking on the street of the US, though the federal court have tried to dismiss such assertion. Lawyers and human rights activists say there is likelihood that the court will rule against improper arrest of the detainees thus setting them free but will shoulder where the freed detainees should go to the executive and legislature

Democrat nominee Obama whose central stance on Iraq was that the war was ill-conceived and if elected as president, he will pull troops out of Iraq. He was recently criticized of retracting his position. McCain who has supported the war from the beginning till date draws a line between himself and Obama. McCain campaign comments that "There appears to be no issue that Barack Obama is not willing to reverse himself on for the sake of political expedience," said Alex Conant, a spokesman for the national Republican Party. "Obama's Iraq problem undermines the central premise of his

candidacy and shows him to be a typical politician." However Obama responded that his trip to Iraq will redefine how he would deal with the situation. "We need to be as careful getting out as we were careless getting in." This means, he said, that his 16-month timeline "was always premised on" not endangering either U.S. troops or Iraq's stability, which he had previously been told by commanders was possible. "I'm going to continue to gather information to see whether those conditions still hold," he said. "My goal is to end this conflict as soon as possible."

It appears that Senator Obama is trying to reshape his campaign tactics for the November election, something many see as moving into the centre mainstream politics. The Illinois Senator, who has favored diplomacy over Iran's nuclear program, has recently toughened his stance on Tehran. In a recent speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Obama, dubbed Iran the greater threat to peace and stability in Middle East. Obama, who aspires to become the first black president in US history, also backed a recent House bill authorizing warrantless wiretapping program. The bill shields telecommunications companies that assisted the Bush administration in its wiretapping efforts against lawsuits. Obama pledged in February to oppose the bill and filibuster any attempt to provide such companies with the retroactive protection. The Democratic nominee also defended a Supreme Court ruling scrapping a ban on handgun in Washington, a position contrasts with stances taken by many liberals. He further opposed a Supreme Court ruling banning the death penalty for child rape, saying states should be able to impose such a penalty for heinous crimes. Obama also drew fire from liberals for naming a pro-globalization economist as his chief economic advisor and toning down his opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement which he once called a "big mistake". Obama recently won the support of many Republicans and Conservatives including Republican Senator Chuck Hagel and former secretary of State Colin Powell. Obama campaign is also trying to woo religious groups in a bid to demystify the view that the Republican has monopoly over religious groupings in America.

Adding to the flavour of election campaign, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen emphatically stated that an attack on Iran will be challenging and catastrophic hence urges the administration to go for diplomacy. This seems to replay the rhythm of Obama that if elected president he will have an unconditional direct talk with Iran. Republican presidential nominee Sen. John McCain has said that his rival's willingness to hold direct talks, without preconditions, reveals "the depth of Sen. Obama's inexperience and reckless judgment." Adm. Mullen, much like Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke, is one of those powerful unelected officials whose words could, at times, have as much effect on the campaign as Obama and McCain themselves. Jon Alterman, the director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington said "What struck me about the comments was that he called for dialogue with Iran in his preliminary statement, even before he was responding to (reporters')

questions,” Alterman pointed to Mullen’s opening statement in which he said, “I’m convinced a solution still lies in using other elements of national power to change Iranian behavior, including diplomatic, financial and international pressure. There is a need for better clarity, even dialogue at some level.” Mullen explained, “The consequences of that (military action) sometimes are very difficult to predict.”..... “Just about every move in that part of the world is a high-risk move. And that's why I think it's so important that the international piece, the financial piece, the diplomatic piece, the economic piece be brought to bear with a level of intensity that resolves this.”

According to an award-winning American investigative reporter Seymour Hersh the Bush administration has been preparing a 'battlefield' with Iran, the Bush administration gave a major 'boost' to clandestine operations against Tehran to destabilize the Iranian regime. "Late last year, Congress agreed to a request from President Bush to fund a major escalation of covert operations against Iran,"....."These operations, for which the President sought up to four hundred million dollars, were described in a Presidential Finding signed by Bush, and are designed to destabilize the country’s religious leadership." The funding for the destabilization is supposed to go through minority groups within and outside Iran, this has also be reinforced "The United States Special Operations Forces conducting cross-border operations from southern Iraq, with Presidential authorization, since last year," However the new US strategy faced strong opposition from some senior officials and military leaders. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Admiral William Fallon, who resigned last March from his post as the head of Central Command, were among the most outspoken opponents to the strategy. Hersh says the escalation strategy also raised skepticism among some lawmakers and congressional leaders, and were subject to "a significant amount of high-level discussion." Legislators were troubled by the operations' nature and that many of the clandestine activities were not specified in the secret Finding. But the opposition failed to derail the plans. "The oversight process has not kept pace it’s been co-opted," by the administration, said the congressional official familiar with the Finding. "The claim was that the military was ‘preparing the battle space,’ and by using that term they were able to circumvent congressional oversight.”Everything is justified in terms of fighting the global war on terror."

The US public diplomacy is deficient as most diplomats lack communications skills to reach out to the public while being overwhelmed with administrative work, said a congressional report. "Public-affairs officers view themselves, and are viewed by others, more as managers and administrators than as expert communicators," said the report by the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. "[They] are being asked to spend the overwhelming majority of their time on administration and management, not outreach." The report said that American diplomats don't get enough public-diplomacy training. "It is not yet strong enough, with a number of conspicuous, and serious, blind spots." The commission said the overseas staffing structure of the Department of State has not

changed since 1999. "[It] makes no special effort to recruit individuals into the [public-diplomacy] career track who would bring into the Foreign Service experience or skills specifically relevant to the work of communicating with and influencing foreign publics."

A new type of three-dimensional scanners has begun to appear at several airports around the world. Airports in Canada, Moscow and Osaka as well as those in several U.S cities such as Phoenix, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Denver, Albuquerque, and New York all use the body-scanning machines on randomly selected passengers. These, for the time being, voluntary scanners are being described as virtually stripping passengers naked. The scanners use high frequency electromagnetic waves to produce a detailed 3-D image of the body without clothing. Any suspicious items appearing in the image are further investigated by a conventional security pat down. Privacy concerns about the new scanners have been raised by some organizations. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) sent out a warning to American Muslims and others with concerns over personal privacy, stating that the scanners reveal intimate body parts to screeners. "It is important that you know that you have the option to request a pat-down by a security officer of your gender in a private room instead of going through the body-scanning machine," said CAIR Civil Rights Manager Khadija Athman

Professor Ofer Grosbard, clinical psychologist at the University of Haifa, during an interview announced that he will be launching an interactive webpage that would tell how the Quran has answers to many problems in the guardian and counseling section. The idea for such project came during a teaching section with Muslim graduate students proving that the Quran have a much more powerful impact when it comes to counseling psychological problems. "When I asked her to explain, she said that, in the appropriate context, quotation of a verse from the Qur'an has enormous impact on Muslims." Grosbard then asked the students to make up stories based on these verses. He later added a short psychological-education explanation to each story. The outcome was a 600-page Hebrew manuscript published in a book in May, addressing 330 questions on issues such as violence, mourning, incest, adolescence, etc. "That was how Quranet came into being," said Grosbard, who is now planning to translate the book into Arabic and English and upload the texts onto an interactive website. However Muslims have raise eyebrow against the project as another plot of the Jews to misinterpret the Quran in their own fashion. Sheikh Shawqi Abdel-Latif of the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Endowments) told *Al-Masri Al-Youm* newspaper. "Israel wants to lure Muslims into its trap by interpreting the Qur'an in a way that suits Israeli projects," Dr. Manae Abdel-Halim Mahmoud, professor of Qur'anic sciences at Al-Azhar University, also blasted the Israeli project. "Israel only harbors enmity to Islam and Muslims," ... "This project aims

to tarnish the image of Islam by giving wrong interpretation of the Noble Qur'an." The Palestinian Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs also rejected the project, saying there was no reason to re-interpret the Qur'an into Hebrew as the Holy Book has been interpreted correctly many times before.

It was clear that winning certain states in the US election primary would be determined by how much support a candidate gets from certain ethnic group. Obviously the Hispanics were critical for both Obama and Clinton during the primaries, and also they would be important to be wooed by both Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama in the November White House elections. Hispanic community is a growing minority in the US and the largest minority group in Florida, according to data released in March by the US Census Bureau. The population increased by 70.4 percent from 1.6-million to 2.7-million between 1990 and 2000, a growth rate more than twice as rapid as that of African-Americans, who number 2.3-million. Many Hispanics argue that Miami is the capital of Latin America and people should reckon with that fact as the second person on the street is a Latino. They however acknowledge the fact that people should learn English so as not to limit their horizon but at the same time there should be room for multicultural and multilingual setting.

Canadians are appropriately distrustful of stores that ask them for personal information, showing an increased awareness of the danger of identity theft. One in two people surveyed by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada said they had resisted a retailer's request for information such as a phone number or postal code, saying they demanded to know why it was needed. "Our personal information is increasingly invaluable in the marketplace, and I am very pleased to hear that consumers are taking charge and questioning requests for their information," said Privacy Commissioner Jennifer Stoddart. Forty-five percent said they had refused to hand over any information whatsoever and 13 percent deliberately gave false information. Safety and security concerns were the top reason for protecting personal information, the survey found. Some consumers said they simply worried about how the information might be used while others expressed concerns specifically about identity theft, fraud and computer hackers. Privacy officials aim to use the poll results to boost awareness among shoppers and retailers of Canada's privacy laws.

A powerful Canadian business group wants Prime Minister Stephen Harper to change his stance on agricultural trade to help achieve a breakthrough in the Doha Round of world trade talks. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce on Friday published a letter it sent to Harper this week that said the Conservative government's defense of protectionist measures for certain farm sectors is "untenable" and a possible barrier to global economic growth and poverty reduction. "The time has come for the government to empower our officials with greater flexibility to negotiate," said the letter, signed by Perrin Beatty, president of the Chamber. "The Canadian Chamber of Commerce ... urges you and your government to sign on to this important modalities agreement." Officials in the Prime

Minister's office were not immediately available to comment. Ottawa in May rejected a draft text on farm trade aimed at pushing ahead the stalled World Trade Organization talks. The proposals would force Canada to modify a decades-old marketing scheme that protects its poultry and dairy producers from foreign competition through price controls and import tariffs of over 200 percent. Canada's Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz said at the time the government was "disappointed" by the proposal and he vowed to defend the scheme.

A small Muslim community in Calgary, Alberta opens Canada's largest Mosque. Construction was completed in two years for just a C\$15 million (\$14.7 million) Just 3,000 people make up the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in the oil-industry hub of Calgary. But their leaders expect numbers to grow quickly, prompting the need for the 48,000 square foot (4,460 square meter) Baitun Nur mosque with its towering minaret and ornate calligraphy. It also shows the increasingly multicultural makeup of a city often thought of as overwhelmingly white, conservative and Christian. "We did not have intentions just to make the largest mosque. We started building it and we tried to meet our needs, needs for the future generations," organizer Safeer Khan said on a tour of the sprawling facility, whose architecture contrasts sharply with nondescript industrial and retail buildings in the city's northeast. "We wanted to pull our young generation from the street to keep them busy here with constant activities and positive activities." On Wednesday, the London-based leader of the sect, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, arrived to adoring, chanting local Ahmadis. He toured the prayer halls, gymnasium, classrooms, offices, television studio and kitchen facilities. His sermon was to be broadcast to Muslims in nearly 190 countries on Friday using the satellite TV facilities. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier are among dignitaries scheduled to help inaugurate the mosque on Saturday.

Oceania

Lawyers and human rights activists are questioning the World Youth Day arrangement as government tries to warn people of not doing anything stupid and not to be caught otherwise fined \$5000. The World Youth Day will be celebrated along with the Pope visit to Australia. Many plan to protest against the event and the Pope visit in respect to certain views held by the church. Anna Katzman, the president of the New South Wales Bar Association, which represents almost 3,000 lawyers in the state, said making someone's inconvenience the basis of a criminal offense was "unnecessary and repugnant." "If I was to wear a T-shirt proclaiming that 'World Youth Day is a waste of public money' and refuse to remove it when an officer ... asks me to, I would commit a criminal offense," Katzman said. "How ridiculous is that?"

Most Australians 52 percent never or very seldom visit a church, mosque, synagogue or temple for religious reasons, according to an international survey carried out by Germany's Bertelsmann Foundation. While one in four of Australia's 21 million people classify themselves as deeply religious, 28 percent are not at all religious and another 44 percent say religion does not play a central role in their lives. The Religion Monitor survey is the most extensive and detailed study on the significance of religion in the main cultures of the world, says the Bertelsmann Foundation, a private, non-profit group. The

survey found that of 21 countries surveyed, only four showed less interest in religion than Australia , Russia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. But the pope will not be in a "religious desert" for the celebrations in Sydney from July 15-20, the report says at 25 percent of the population, Catholics make up the country's biggest faith group.

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: August 12, 2008

Europe, United States and the Rest of the World

By: Bakare Najimdeen

Period: From 3rd -9th August 2008

Headlines

- ISIS study: Iran war 'a vain effort'
- U.S. drops winning hearts, minds drive
- Georgia fails to capitalize on offensive
- EU: Israel undermines ME peace
- MasterCard Creates an Islamic Debit Card
- New Marriage Contract for UK Muslims

Report Detail

ISIS study: Iran war 'a vain effort'

Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) recently came up with the report warning against attack on Iran as counterproductive. According to the think tank, a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities 'is unlikely' to delay the country's programme. "Current knowledge of the (Iranian) complex is lacking," "Without that knowledge, an attack is unlikely to significantly delay Iran's mastery of enrichment with gas centrifuges." The principal author of the report, the ISIS president and a former UN weapons inspector, David Albright claimed that any damage to Iran's nuclear programme could be quickly repaired. Iran manufactures key components of its nuclear programme, making the country self-sufficient regarding the technology, Albright expounded.

Iran however has warned and threatened that any attack will be adequately responded as it is ready to inflict damage on 32 US interest in the region and Israel which is a strong ally of US will not be exempted. The ISIS study also cautions that an attack against Iranian sites will backfire by compelling the country to acquire nuclear weaponry.

"An attack would likely leave Iran angry, more nationalistic, fed up with international inspectors and nonproliferation treaties," Albright said. "Iran would likely launch a 'crash' programme to quickly obtain nuclear weapons." Nevertheless Iran cites diplomacy as the

only acceptable means for clarifying the nature of its nuclear programme and ending the nuclear standoff.

U.S. drops winning hearts, minds drive

There exists no doubt that United States foreign policy in the Middle East is facing serious hurdles. The present situation in Iraq is a testimony that forceful democratization could be dangerous like eliminating authoritarian government. James Glassman, the new Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy highlighted that mending the cracks in the US-Middle East relation would require flexibility and attempting at winning hearts. The top public officer believes that US is tackling a non-priority issues in the region. According to him "the key to the new approach is that the US is not at the center of the war of ideas,"....."The focus becomes defeating an ideology not making ourselves liked. "And in that way we can accomplish our goals with people who don't necessarily like our policies." Hence he hoped that the new approach envisages help to local groups to find alternatives to extremism in all fields, from politics and technology to sports and religion. Washington has augmented the number of scholarships for Muslim students to study in the US. "We need to be actively engaged on the hopeful, constructive side of this battle."

Fawaz Gerges, a Middle East expert at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, also buttressed the point that the US should rather face issues more to the heart of the region that what the US felt is good for the people. "The Bush administration still sees Al-Qaeda and radical Islam as the defining challenges in the Arab and Muslim worlds, whereas the people there do not see these as the major threats to their societies,"

Georgia fails to capitalize on offensive

Russia has claimed that the offensive campaign initiated by Georgia prompted it to take the recent military step in the wake of Olympic opening that has left many questions to be answered. The timing suggests Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili may have been counting on surprise to fulfill his longtime pledge to wrest back control of South Ossetia, a key to his hold on power.

Russia sent columns of tanks and reportedly bombed Georgian air bases after Georgia launched a major military offensive to retake the breakaway province of South Ossetia, threatening to ignite a broader conflict. Hundreds of civilians were reported dead in the worst outbreak of hostilities since the province won de facto independence in a war against Georgia that ended in 1992. Witnesses said the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali was devastated. The attack has greatly been condemned by the European Union and Georgia staunch ally, United States. They have sent envoys to the region in order to contain the situation and reduce the tendency of all-out war. The United States has asked Russia to respect the territorial integrity of Georgia. Georgia's Foreign Ministry accused Russian aircraft of bombing two military air bases inside Georgia, inflicting some casualties and destroying several military aircraft.

Georgia, a staunch US ally, has about 2,000 troops in Iraq, making it the third-largest contributor to coalition forces after the US and Britain is planning to bring home its troops to combat the situation at home. According to Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili the troops would be called home in the face of the South Ossetia fighting.

EU: Israel undermines ME peace

The European Union showed its disapproval towards the new plan and decision of the Israeli government to build more Jewish settlements on Palestinian land undermines the credibility of the ME peace process.

The French EU Presidency issued a statement on saying it is "deeply concerned by the decision by the Israeli authorities to approve the construction" of 400 more housing units in East al-Quds. "The construction of settlements anywhere in the Occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem [al-Quds], is illegal under international law," the statement read. "This decision serves to undermine the credibility of the ongoing peace process," it added. "Settlement activities prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations and compromise the viability of a concerted two-state solution."

Israeli Interior Ministry announced that a committee had approved a plan first introduced in March to put up 400 housing units in Neve Yaakov neighborhood, in predominantly Arab East al-Quds. Although Israel has committed not to establish new settlements in the West Bank, it has in recent months announced the construction of hundreds of new Jewish homes in the territory in breach of the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

MasterCard Creates an Islamic Debit Card

MasterCard Worldwide and EonCap Islamic Bank (a member of Malaysia's Eon Bank Group) have jointly launched what they are billing as the world's first Islamic debit MasterCard the EonCap Islamic Debit MasterCard. The EonCap Islamic Debit MasterCard is basically a debit card with ATM functions as well. It also works on PayPass systems, which enables a person to swipe it on a terminal without the card leaving the cardholder's hand. It is referred to as blending traditional purchasing power with modern technology and is Shari'ah compliant.

Fozia Amanulla, chief executive officer of Eoncap Islamic Bank observed "it is designed to appeal to both Muslim and non-Muslim individuals who prefer better financial control as the card ensures that purchases are automatically deducted from the cardholder's account and approved only if enough funds exist within the account. It helps track spending, comes with worldwide acceptance at more than 26 million locations and can be used at an ATM for e-banking,"

Shuan Ghaidan, head of product sales and delivery, Asia-Pacific at MasterCard Worldwide also noted "MasterCard is pleased to collaborate with Eoncap Islamic Bank in order to introduce this card to Malaysian consumers. The EonCap Islamic Debit MasterCard card is designed for individuals who prefer to spend what they have in their accounts, yet seek the same functionality and assurances of a credit card," said

New Marriage Contract for UK Muslims

In the UK, Muslim a think tank in collaboration with Muslim Associations has drafted a new marriage contract geared at ameliorating the current marriage structure among British Muslims. The contract critically explains the bid by the Muslim community to further show their commitment towards integration with the mainstream society and value system. The contract obviously was welcomed by appreciable stakeholders in the British society.

According to Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, Director of the Muslim Institute "in Britain, more marriages are breaking down and young people have said that we need to update things,"....."The document is a challenge to various Shari`ah(Islamic law) councils who don't believe in gender equality,"

The new contract emphasizes on mutual consultation and on the financial independence of the husband and wife. Under the new document, a husband will have to waive his right to polygamy. The contract does not require a "marriage guardian" (wali) for the bride, and gives the wife the right of divorce while retaining all her financial rights. It stresses that "two adult witnesses of good character" (whether males or females, Muslims or non-Muslims) must be recognized as just as capable of providing a reputable guarantee of the marriage and agreed upon terms.

The contract also provides women with written proof of their marriage and of the terms and conditions agreed between the spouses. "The document is a challenge to various Shari`ah (Islamic law) councils who don't believe in gender equality but the world has changed and Islamic law has to be renegotiated," said Siddiqui. The current Islamic marriage in Britain is not legally binding and its contract does not provide written proof of the marriage and of the terms agreed upon. The new formula, which took four years to negotiate and create, has been compiled by the Muslim Institute, a leading Muslim think-tank. It is backed by leading Muslim groups including the Imams & Mosques Council, the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Law (Shari`ah) Council UK.

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: August 22, 2008

Europe, North America and Rest of the World

By: Bakare Najimdeen

Period: From 10th -16th July 2008

Headlines

North/West Europe

- French Role in the Georgia-Russia crisis
- OIC Slams Germany Anti-Islam Meeting

Southern Europe

Southeast Europe

- BESA...When Muslims Saved Jews
- Ramadan Unites Balkan Muslims
- Religion Debated in Romania Schools

Russia and its Neighbour

- Russia's Medvedev halts military action in Georgia
- War shows that Putin is running things in Russia
- Georgia leader signs truce, but will Russia leave?
- Russia: Poland risks attack because of US missiles

USA/Canada

- Bush warns Russia to pull back in Georgia
- US, allies weigh punishment for Russia
- Obama's 'no income taxes on seniors' draws critics
- Clinton backer plan noise at Democrat Convention
- Police Allowed to Spy on Americans

- Harper suggests he may force election
- Liberals lead ruling Conservatives in poll

Oceania

- Australia to back US-India nuclear pact with suppliers: Rudd

Detail of the Report

North/West Europe

The political goal scored by the French president Nicolas Sarkozy in the recent Georgia-Russia crisis further spells out the intention of the French president to reclaim the lost glory of France on the international arena. France although currently holds the rotational presidency of the EU availed that avenue to show the political will and diplomatic strength of the EU and consequently the influence of France. Fortunately Sarkozy was able to negotiate an EU-brokered truce for the fierce conflict over the breakaway region and it was followed up by the US, although Europeans are waiting for the Russian president to acknowledge the document signed by the Georgian leader.

The burning issue of integration and multiculturalism obviously does not appear to see a conclusive end in the nearest future as many elements both within the Muslim European community and the host European communities continue to widen the gap of understanding. In this backdrop, the largest Islamic organization (OIC) has condemned and warned against the proposed anti-Islamization Conference to be held next month in Cologne Germany, "The OIC expresses serious concern over reports of the holding of 'Anti Islamization Congress' in Cologne, Germany," the world's biggest Muslim body said in a statement on Saturday, August 9.

The so-called "Anti-Islamization Congress" is to take place on September 19-20 in Germany's fourth-largest city of Cologne. The meeting is organized by Pro Koeln, a far-right organization which has held five seats in Cologne's city council since 2004, and the its political party Pro NRW. It will bring together far-right political forces and some of the most inflammatory names in politics Europe-wide, including France's Jean- Marie Le Pen, Austria's Heinz-Christian Strache and Belgium's Filip Dewinter. Many of Pro Koeln members were associated with neo-Nazi parties or groupings. Recently the group led a campaign against plans for a large mosque in Cologne, home to more than 120,000 Muslims. Pro Koeln is under the microscope of Germany's domestic intelligence agency because its "generalizing and sweeping defamation of foreigners is suspected of violating human dignity."

The pan-Muslim body warned that the conference was "intended to arouse anti-Muslim sentiments in Europe. "Organizers of the proposed event were motivated by racial hatred and xenophobia." And believes it would further derail the effort of mending the difference between the Muslim European community and the host society.

Southern Europe

Southeast Europe

After a five year painstaking effort to unveil the effort of Muslims who had saved Jews from the claws of the Nazi soldiers, Norman Gershman an American Jew believes such heroic effort must be appreciated. According to him through the pictures he has dusted out from forgotten archive "In fact, Albania is the only Nazi occupied country that

sheltered Jews," says Gershman. "They came in as guests. They were given Muslim names, they were living with Muslim families." Gershman believes that to Muslim Albanians, the idea of not saving Jews from the Nazis was inconceivable. "They did this in the name of their religion. They absolutely had no prejudice what so ever. "I asked them 'why did you do this? What was in the Qur'an that you did this?' They would only smile. "Some of them said 'we have saved lives to go to paradise.

From the saviors' tales, Gershman found that Albanian Muslims considered BESA a manifestation of the Islamic teachings of keeping the promise and protecting the weak. "I remember that some of them said 'there is no BESA without the Qur'an.'" People usually ask Gershman about the title he chose for the fruit of his painstaking five-year efforts. "BESA is a tribal Albanian culture that goes back to thousands of years," he explains. "What BESA says is that if some one knocks on your door you have an absolute obligation – no matter who that person is – to save their lives." Gershman concludes "I am proud and happy to show this story to the world," The Jewish American, who has studied Sufism, says Islam is not what many Westerners think. "To me Islam is poetry, is science, is to be with the divine. Islam is beauty." And he also warned against the stereotype view held against Muslims in the West, as he said there are many good people around the world and Muslims are one.

In a show of unity, Muslim religious authorities in Bosnian, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia have agreed to observe the start of the holy fasting month of Ramadan on September 1. "We follow astronomical calculations to determine the beginning of the lunar months," Subhi Wassim, an official with the Islamic Sheikdom of Bosnia. "Therefore, the first day of Ramadan will be observed in Bosnia on September 1," he added. Muslims make up nearly 40 percent of Bosnia's 3.8 million population.

Neighboring Serbia's nearly half a million Muslim will start the dawn-to-dusk fast on the same day as Bosnia. "We consider ourselves part of the Islamic institution in Bosnia and coordinate with them in all things," said Hajrudin Balic, a media officer of the Islamic Sheikdom of Serbia. Muslims who make up 33 percent of Macedonia's two million population will follow Turkey in determining the start of Ramadan. "The Islamic Sheikdom of Macedonia and Dar al-Ifta in Turkey have an agreement to unify all Islamic occasions according to astronomic calculations," Afrim Alija, a teacher in a school affiliated to the sheikdom. The Islamic sheikdom of Slovenia, where Muslims make up 2.4 percent of two million population, agrees with Turkey and Bosnia on the start of the fasting month. Montenegro Mufti Jusuf Gjoken said the country's 140,000 Muslims, who constitute up to 20 percent of the population, will coordinate with both Bosnia and Turkey on Ramadan start. "We are living in neighboring countries and it would be wrong to disagree on the beginning of the fast," he told IOL. "The unity of Muslims in the Balkan is a top priority to all Islamic sheikhdoms in the region."

Romanians would not deny their attachment to the Orthodox Church as around 90 percent of Romania's population belong to the Orthodox Church. Three-quarters say they

trust the Church, making it Romania's most popular institution while only one in five people trusts parliament. The Church has often been accused by human rights groups and political observers of interfering in government policies and working to keep the rights of sexual minorities off the agenda. In view of the role of religion on politics and in the larger society the government is planning to shape the structure of religion in school.

Government reforms will modernize curricula and overhaul religious instruction are sparking a hot debate in Romania on the role of religion in schools. "Religious education here indoctrinates, fuelling prejudice against other faiths and against sexual minorities," Smaranda Enache, co-president of human rights group Liga Pro-Europa. "But it's more than this. Teaching children to discriminate against something builds a national mentality and in the end people reject differences and discriminate against everything."

The government has proposed education reforms that would introduce alternatives to religion classes. Under the planned reforms, all religious symbols will be placed in schools, not just Orthodox icons, as is the case now in most schools. Atheists would also be allowed to refuse religious education without parental permission if over 16 years old. At the moment, parental permission is required.

Russia and its Neighbour

Georgia launched an offensive late Thursday to regain control over South Ossetia, which has run its own affairs since 1992 and developed close ties with Russia. In return Russia sent in troops that fought Georgian forces and launched air raids over Georgian territory.

After a week long campaign in Georgia geared at protecting the Russians in South Ossetia, the Russian President has asked for a halt. "The security of our peacekeepers and civilians has been restored," Medvedev said in a nationally televised statement. "The aggressor has been punished and suffered very significant losses. Its military has been disorganized." At the same time, Medvedev ordered the military to quell any signs of Georgian resistance. "If there are any emerging hotbeds of resistance or any aggressive actions, you should take steps to destroy them," he told his defense minister at a Kremlin meeting.

Russia's foreign minister, meanwhile, said that Georgia's president must leave office and Georgian troops should stay out of South Ossetia region for good. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Moscow won't talk to President Mikhail Saakashvili and Saakashvili "better go."

The striking thing about the whole military action was the question of who is behind the Russian response. Many analysts have tried to surmise that Prime Minister Putin was behind because of his political stamina and an attempt to expand the power of the prime minister which somehow limits the power of the president. Putin was said to have address the nation for a response even before the president and while the president

was to meet with the French president for a ceasefire, talks could not be held until the arrival of Putin. Hence the Georgia campaign in a way attest to the view held by some public survey that many Russians still believe Prime Minister Putin holds the real Kremlin power not the new president.

The Georgian president signed a truce to ending the recent campaign in the country. The deal is expected to be acknowledged by the Russian president which of course still pending. The cease-fire document sets out no specific penalties or deadlines. It contains concessions to Russia that Saakashvili obviously found hard to swallow. Russia could retain peacekeeping forces in the separatist region of South Ossetia and another breakaway region, Abkhazia, and the forces would have a broader mandate in South Ossetia. The Georgian leaders are offended because of the attack on Gori which is considered as half of Georgia. Georgian president held the view that Russia acted arrogantly and in a barbaric manner for attacking a sovereign state, though report has it that Georgia started the whole drama, and was taken into advantage by Russia. The Georgian president also accused the Europeans of not stopping the campaign when they saw it coming. Russia on the other hand also accuses Europeans of double standard as they have refused to condemn Georgia for launching an offensive rather their attention was directed towards Russia response. The Bush administration has worked hard to ensure the truce is acknowledged by Russia as the latter is threatened of sidelining in the midst of G8 and denying it membership in the World Trade Organization.

While other analysts argue that even if the cease-fire holds in Georgia, the consequences of the crisis could be grim: Tensions might jeopardize Russian energy shipments to Europe, cut the U.S. off from access to the International Space Station, end intelligence cooperation between Washington and Moscow in the war on terrorism.

President Bush urges Russia to forget the past and put aside the cold war thinking. "The Cold War is over. The days of satellite states and spheres of influence are behind us," Bush said at the White House, before a vacation delayed by the crisis. "A contentious relationship with Russia is not in America's interest, and a contentious relationship with America is not in Russia's interest."

In a separate development Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates said "Russia's behavior over the past week has called into question the entire premise of that dialogue and has profound implications for our security relationship going forward, both bilaterally and with NATO," Mr. Gates said at the Pentagon. "If Russia does not step back from its aggressive posture and actions in Georgia, the U.S.-Russian relationship could be adversely affected for years to come."

Upon the agreement between Poland and the United States on Thursday for Poland to accept a missile interceptor base as part of a system the United States says is aimed at blocking attacks by rogue nations. Moscow, however, feels it is aimed at Russia's missile force. The acceptance has triggered Russia army Chief that Poland is at risk. "Poland, by deploying (the system) is exposing itself to a strike 100 percent," Nogovitsyn, the deputy chief of staff, was quoted as saying. He added, in clear reference to the agreement, that Russia's military doctrine sanctions the use of nuclear weapons "against the allies of countries having nuclear weapons if they in some way help them." Nogovitsyn that would include elements of strategic deterrence systems.

Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski was quoted Friday by the Polish news agency PAP as saying that Poland is open to Russian inspections because it wants to give Moscow "tangible proof" that the planned base is not directed against Russia. Similarly in an interview on Poland's news channel TVN24, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said the United States agreed to help augment Poland's defenses with Patriot missiles in exchange for placing 10 missile defense interceptors in the Eastern European country.

U.S. officials however have said the timing of the deal was not meant to antagonize Russian leaders at a time when relations already are strained over the recent fighting between Russia and Georgia over the separatist Georgian region of South Ossetia.

USA/Canada

President Bush condemned the Russian attack and asked Russia to respect the sovereignty of Georgia. According to Bush "Russia has invaded a sovereign neighboring state and threatens a democratic government elected by its people. Such an action is unacceptable in the 21st century," Bush said from the White House on Monday just an hour after he returned to Washington from attending the Olympics in China. "The Russian government must reverse the course it appears to be on and accept this peace agreement as a first step toward solving this conflict," the president said. He added that he is deeply concerned that Russia, which Georgian officials say has effectively split their country in two, might bomb the civilian airport in the capital of Tbilisi and take the city. Bush said Russia's escalation had "raised serious questions about its intentions in Georgia and the region" and had "substantially damaged Russia's standing in the world."

But with scant leverage in the face of an emboldened Moscow, Washington and its friends have been forced to face the uncomfortable reality that their options are limited to mainly symbolic measures, such as boycotting Russian-hosted meetings and events that may have little or no long-term impact on Russia's behavior, the officials said. The US and its allies although are mulling over a short-term punishment for Russia.

For now, the Bush administration decided to boycott a third meeting at NATO on Tuesday at which the alliance's governing board, the North Atlantic Council, was preparing for a meeting with a Russian delegation that has been called at Moscow's request, officials said. In addition, a senior defense official said the U.S. has decided to dump a major NATO naval exercise with Russia that was scheduled to begin Friday.

However US focused primarily on confirming a cease-fire and attending to Georgia's urgent humanitarian needs following five days of fierce fighting, including Russian attacks on civilian targets. "It is very important now that all parties cease fire," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said. "The Georgians have agreed to a cease-fire, the Russians need to stop their military operations as they have apparently said that they will, but those military operations really do now need to stop because calm needs to be restored."

At the same time, however, President Bush and his top aides were engaged in frantic consultations with European and other nations over how best to demonstrate their fierce condemnations of the Russian operation that began in Georgia's separatist region of South Ossetia, expanded to another disputed area, Abkhazia, and ended up on purely Georgian soil. "The idea is to show the Russians that it is no longer business as usual," said one senior official familiar with the consultations among world leaders that were going on primarily by phone and in person at NATO headquarters in Brussels, where alliance diplomats met together and then with representatives of Georgia. Russian leaders have said they do not plan a long-term occupation, the official said. The official was not specific about whether Russia has offered a timeline for withdrawal.

As part of Obama's plan when he is elected president, American senior with incomes below \$50,000 will for the rest of their life free of federal income tax. The Obama campaign says the idea would give tax cuts averaging \$1,400 to 7 million seniors who are battling inflation with mostly fixed incomes. The campaign also says the plan would relieve millions of older people from having to file complicated tax returns. "If you work hard and pay into the system, you've earned the right to a secure retirement," says a description of the plan on the Obama campaign's Web site. "But too many seniors aren't getting that security, even though they've held up their end of the bargain. Lower- and middle-income seniors are struggling as their expenses on health and energy skyrocket while their incomes do not keep pace."

This intended policy was quickly welcomed with criticism from different angles. Seniors typically have paid off their mortgages. Many have investments and usually don't pay taxes on their Social Security benefits. The kids are usually grown, so they're not saddled with day care or college costs. Clint Stretch, managing principal of tax policy for Deloitte Tax said "The odds are the retired folks — they're getting pensions, they're getting Social Security, they have investment assets, they own a house — so ... they're better off than somebody who is 30 or 40 years younger who's trying to buy a house (and) trying to start saving." While some of Obama's allies in Washington think he's onto a bad idea. "Most low- and moderate-income seniors already owe no income tax. Among seniors with incomes below \$50,000 who do owe income tax, a significant number have modest incomes because they are retired but possess substantial assets," said Robert Greenstein, who heads the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal think tank. "Given all the problems and needs the nation faces, targeting relief to this group isn't a priority." The Tax Policy Center, a think tank run jointly by the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute, gave the idea bad grades in a recent study of the two presidential candidates' tax plans.

The wound of the US election primary has yet to heal as many Clinton supporters still believe she was cheated and demand that her name be placed in nomination alongside Obama during the traditional state-by-state delegation roll call vote at the Democratic National Convention in Denver with the intention that the nomination will be handed to her. They have maintained the staunch position that they would not easily tune towards supporting Obama. They also demand that she gets her own plum speaking slot and so does her husband, former President Bill Clinton.

The group comes under the umbrella known as 'Just Say No Deal Coalition' objecting to any form of coalition between Obama and Clinton. "I am a very realistic woman," said Diane Mantouvalos, co-founder of the Just Say No Deal Coalition. "I don't think that anything is going to change, but I do think it is important to be heard, and this is our way of doing it." Similarly is the 'Denver Group' planning a reception the evening Hillary Clinton speaks at the convention. The group has been pushing for Clinton's name to be placed in nomination. In announcing that her name will be placed in nomination, Clinton said she hopes the vote will unite the party and lead to an Obama victory in November.

However some of the disaffected Clinton supporters are open to supporting Obama; many are not. Obama needs Clinton's supporters to beat Republican John McCain. Polls show that he has won over most of them. But some simply don't like Obama or still feel Clinton was treated unfairly during the primaries. Many wounded lion among Clinton's supporters said they remained angered by the Michigan vote

Compounding the growing fear among Americans that their privacy is at stake, the US Justice Department has proposed new domestic spying guidelines allowing local state and police agencies to eavesdrop on Americans. "This is a continuum that started back on 9/11 to reform law enforcement and the intelligence community to focus on the terrorism threat," said homeland security adviser Kenneth L. Wainstein. Under the proposal, intelligence information could be obtained from public records, the Internet, law enforcement databases and confidential and undercover sources. Law enforcement agencies would also be allowed to launch a criminal intelligence investigation on terror suspicions. They also could share information with a constellation of federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The rules would apply to the country's 18,000 state and local police agencies that would receive about 1.6 billion dollars a year to help cover the costs of their implementation. The new guidelines are part of domestic intelligence changes recently issued by the Bush administration. They include a recent

executive order reorganizing federal spy agencies and a pending Justice Department overhaul of FBI procedures for gathering intelligence and investigating terror cases.

"[The proposed changes] catch up with reality," said Jim McMahon, deputy executive director of the International Association of Chiefs. "It moves what the rules were from 1993 to the new world we live in, but it maintains civil liberties."

However rights groups have criticized the new rules for encouraging abuses. "It turns police officers into spies on behalf of the federal government," said Michael German, policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union. German, an FBI agent for 16 years, said police may misuse their powers while collecting intelligence, even when no underlying crimes is suspected, such as when a person gives money to a charity that independently gives money to a group later designated a terrorist group. "If police officers no longer see themselves as engaged in protecting their communities from criminals and instead as domestic intelligence agents working on behalf of the CIA, they will be encouraged to collect more information."

In Canada, the ruling minority party does not find the system suitable as the opposition parties particularly the liberal party makes governance uneasy for the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper led government. "Quite frankly, I'm going to have to make a judgment in the next little while as to whether or not this Parliament can function productively," said Harper. Harper heads a minority Conservative government that must rely on the support of at least one of the three opposition parties to get bills passed. He complained about legislation being stalled in the Liberal-dominated Senate and obstructed in the House of Commons, principally by Liberal leader Stephane Dion. "Two of the three opposition parties don't support the government and say we should be defeated. Mr. Dion says he doesn't support the government but won't say, you know, whether he will defeat us or not," "I don't think that's a tenable situation." Harper said.

Harper, whose Conservatives defeated the governing Liberals in the January 2006 election, repeated a dare to Dion, first delivered last month, to bring down the government or else let bills pass. "The choice is either to let this government govern, or to let the people decide. I am telling Mr. Dion he should decide for good, and soon," Harper said in the prepared text of remarks to Conservative supporters later in New Brunswick.

Meanwhile the two rival polling institutes Harris-Decima and Ipsos Reid conducted separate polls resulting to two different outcomes. Harris-Decima poll released put the Liberals at 33 percent and the Conservatives at 32 percent, while Ipsos Reid found the Conservatives four percentage points ahead.

Australian Prime Minister Rudd Kelvin said his country is ready to throw its support for the Indo-US nuclear deal. Rudd's statement comes ahead of an August 21 meeting in Vienna of the 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group on the deal, under which the United States will provide energy-starved India with nuclear fuel and technology. Australia is a key member of the NSG, which must approve the US-India deal in order for it to proceed. The US Congress must also ratify the agreement. "We have already indicated to the most recent meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors that the government of Australia would not stand in the way of such an agreement," Rudd said after giving a lecture. He said Canberra had communicated its decision "diplomatically to our friends in Washington and to our friends in New Delhi." Earlier this month, the IAEA -- the UN's atomic watchdog -- approved an inspections agreement with India that was needed for the deal to move forward. Australia also sits on the IAEA's 35-member Board of Governors. However it worth mentioning that such approval of the deal by Australia would augur well for its economy as Australia is willing to sale its huge Uranium to country trusted across the globe.

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: August 29, 2008

Europe, North America and Rest of the World

By: Bakare Najimdeen

Period: From 17th -23rd July 2008

Headlines

North/West Europe

- Report: 3 arrests tied to Web threat on UK leader
- Court says Guantanamo documents should be released
- UK loses prisoner data in latest computer stumble
- French leader proposes vote on Afghanistan troops

Southern Europe

Southeast Europe

- 3 US citizens ordered back to prison in Montenegro
- UN court assigns Scottish judge in Karadzic case

Russia and its Neighbour

- Talk of Russia-Cuba ties seen as warning to U.S.
- Russia Seems to Be Hunkering Down in Georgia
- Russia and West at odds over UN Georgia resolution

USA/Canada

- Obama veep announcement expected in coming days
- Biden is Democratic favorite for Obama's No. 2
- Democrats want tougher action from Obama
- U.S and Poland finalize agreement of Missile system
- CA: Rep. Royce Urged to Drop Language Linking Islam to Terror
- WA: Mosque Get-Together Reaches Beyond Congregation
- Conservatives grow wary of mixing church, politics
- Canada PM's office pushes election, Liberals demur
- Canada admits it's a top ecstasy supplier

Oceania

Detail of the Report

North/West Europe

In London, three terrorism suspects arrested in northern England earlier this month were detained in connection with an Internet threat against Prime Minister Gordon Brown. British Broadcasting Corp. said the three men were being held in connection with a Web posting signed "al-Qaida in Britain" that threatened the life of Brown and his predecessor as Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The statement, posted on a radical Web site earlier this year, demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and the release of some Muslim prison inmates. Britain's Press Association news agency quoted unidentified police officials as confirming the BBC report. The BBC did not explain the suspects' alleged connection to the Internet posting. Lancashire police in northern England were not immediately available for comment, while Brown's office and the Home Office declined comment. The three men were arrested Aug. 14, two of them at Manchester Airport, about 190 miles north of London, and the third in the town of Accrington.

Still in London a British court ordered Foreign Secretary David Miliband on Thursday to disclose secret documents that could prove critical to the defense of a Guantanamo Bay detainee who claims he was tortured while in U.S. custody on terrorism charges. Miliband now has a week to decide whether to comply with the order to release of the documents pertaining to Binyam Mohamed's detention. The British government has argued the release of the documents could compromise national security, and it could appeal the court order. The crux of Mohamed's High Court case was that the British government knew of his detention but failed to ensure he was treated fairly. The court sided squarely with Mohamed's attorneys and ruled he had a right to any information Britain might have on his case. "We believe there will be information helping to corroborate Binyan Mohamed's story," said Richard Stein, one of Mohamed's attorneys. "He says it was during this time that he was tortured and this will obviously affect his case." The lawyers hope to prove Mohamed was detained and interrogated under conditions that constitute torture and would therefore not be admissible at his military war crimes trial in Guantanamo.

British officials have been humiliated by a series of such blunders that has raised questions about its ability to safeguard personal information of citizens even as it works on final details for an ambitious national identification program and an expanded DNA data base. Millions of names and personal details from across the country have been reported lost because computers or memory devices went missing over the past year. The latest comes after the government published a report in June on how it hoped to improve

data handling practices. The Home Office, the country's crime-fighting body, said a contractor lost the device, known as a memory stick, containing the names and dates of birth of 84,000 inmates in England and Wales' entire prison population. The stick also carried the home addresses of 33,000 criminals who committed six or more recordable convictions over the last 12 months, along with information on 10,000 "prolific and priority offenders," a spokeswoman said. She spoke anonymously in line with departmental policy. She said the contractor had the data stick as part of research it was doing for the Home Office "tracking offenders through the criminal justice system." The government has drawn increasing criticism as it reported one data loss after another. Last November, tax officials revealed they had lost computer discs containing information on 25 million people nearly half the country's population. Government departments also have reported losing track of computers, discs and other records carrying information on tens of thousands of prospective military recruits, driving-test candidates and hospital patients. Two sets of secret government files were left on commuter trains in June, leading to the suspension of a senior intelligence official.

France's prime minister wants parliament to vote on whether to keep French forces in Afghanistan, his office said Friday, as a new poll showed most of his compatriots want the troops pulled out after 10 died in a vicious ambush. Prime Minister Francois Fillon will propose to the presidents of each house of parliament that legislators vote on the continuation of the French military mission in Afghanistan during an extraordinary parliamentary session that starts Sept. 22, his office said in a statement. The vote would be in line with a constitutional amendment passed last month requiring that any military mission longer than four months be submitted to parliamentary approval. The ambush prompted French media and opposition Socialists to question France's mission in Afghanistan. Such vote in the legislature, dominated by President Nicolas Sarkozy's conservative party, is nearly certain to approve a continuation of the French presence in Afghanistan. Sarkozy, recently "underlines France's determination to pursue its fight against terrorism, in close liaison with its allies," Sarkozy has shown little sign of interest in a pullout since Monday's attack outside Kabul. But the vote would be an important gesture toward those who questioned Sarkozy's decision in April to reinforce France's force by 700 to about 2,600 troops. Critics said he caved too easily to U.S. pressure for NATO allies to bear more of the burden in increasingly violent Afghanistan.

Southeast Europe

In Podgorica, Montenegro a court ordered three U.S. citizens and seven other ethnic Albanians back to prison after convicting them of plotting a rebellion to establish an Albanian autonomous region within the Adriatic country. The men were found guilty earlier this month of planning attacks on state institutions but had been temporarily freed as long as they remained in Montenegro. Their lawyers have said they would appeal their convictions. "The council of the Higher Court decided to take the group of 10 men back to prison because of possibility of their escape," said a court statement issued Friday. A Montenegrin court ruled earlier this month that the group had gathered weapons and prepared for a rebellion under instructions from their leader, Doda Ljucaj, of Wixom,

Michigan. They were convicted of committing acts against the security of Montenegro and sentenced to prison terms ranging from three months to six-and-a-half years. All of them denied the charges during the trial.

The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal in THE HAGUE, Netherlands on Friday appointed Scottish judge Iain Bonomy to oversee preparations for the genocide trial of former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. Bonomy's appointment comes after tribunal president Fausto Pocar reassigned the Dutch judge who led Karadzic's first appearance at the court. On Aug. 15, Karadzic mailed a letter to Pocar accusing Pocar of having an anti-Serb bias and requesting that he be removed from the case. Pocar said Thursday he had decided to change chambers for "trial management and case distribution needs." In a separate filing, he said Karadzic's letter had been submitted to him improperly, and so there was no need to address it, given the change. Bonomy was a judge in the trial of Karadzic's former mentor Slobodan Milosevic. That case was aborted when Milosevic died of a heart attack in his U.N. cell in March 2006. Bonomy and Karadzic will come face-to-face for the first time Aug. 29, when Karadzic must enter pleas to 11 charges including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. If he refuses, the court automatically enters not guilty pleas. Karadzic was arrested last month in Serbia after 13 years on the run. Tribunal prosecutors allege that he masterminded atrocities including the 1995 Srebrenica massacre and the deadly 44-month siege of Sarajevo during Bosnia's 1992-95 war.

Russia and its Neighbour

The re-opening of relations between Russia and Cuba has created mixed feeling for those that still have the 1962 Cuban missile crisis in memory. Accordingly some analysts see it as a tit-for-tat for U.S. activities in Eastern Europe, including plans for a missile defense system. Cuba expert Phil Peters at the Lexington Institute in Virginia said "Russia is clearly irritated at what it perceives as U.S. meddling in its neighborhood,"...."It seems to be sending a message that if you play on our periphery, we'll play in yours." News report has it that Russia might use Cuba as a refueling base for its nuclear-capable bombers although the Russian Defense Ministry denied the report. Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin went to Havana this month on what was billed as an economic trip and, accompanied by Russian Security Council Secretary Gen. Nikolai Patrushev, and met with Cuban President Raul Castro. The security council, which guides Russian national security policy, said in a following statement the two countries planned "consistent work to restore traditional relations in all areas of cooperation." Prime Minister Vladimir Putin chimed in later, saying, "We need to re-establish positions on Cuba and in other countries." But analysts said Russia was a lot more likely to get increased trade with Cuba than it was military cooperation. "It's impossible to imagine that anyone in the Cuban leadership would want to put their country in the bull's eye of another superpower showdown reminiscent of the missile crisis," said Brian Latell, a former CIA analyst now at the University of Miami.

The cease fire signed between Russia and Georgia is yet to materialize into what is expected by the West from Russia. It is expected that Russia pull out its troops from Georgia particularly from Gori, a town that matters most to Georgia. The Russian troops however believe that they are moving but at their own pace and still acting as peace keeper for South Ossetia. The European Union along with the US have heightened their criticism of Russia for dragging to comply raptly to the ceasefire agreement.

- • Do not resort to the use of force.
- • The absolute cessation of all hostilities.
- • Free access to humanitarian assistance.
- • The armed forces of Georgia must withdraw to their permanent positions.
- • The armed forces of the Russian Federation must withdraw to the line where they were stationed prior to the beginning of hostilities. Prior to the establishment of international mechanisms, the Russian peacekeeping forces will take additional security measures.
- • An international debate on the future status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and ways to ensure their lasting security will take place.

One other concern for the western countries is the fact that they felt though Russia is moving out of Georgia but strengthening its hold in South Ossetia. According to American officials familiar with intelligence reports the Russian military deployed several SS-21 missile launchers and supply vehicles to South Ossetia. From the new launching positions north of Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, the missiles can reach much of Georgia, including Tbilisi, the capital.

EU on the other end are cautious confronting Russia partly for their energy need, yet there is a divide between the new and old Europe group on how to address Russia over the recent issue. Germany has spearheaded nations that took it tough with Russia and the continent is looking forward to NATO summit to decide on how to give an adequate response to Russia incursion into Georgia, a scenario that has enhance the fear of aggressive Russia among European countries.

At the United Nations members of the Security Council are yet to agree on the demand of Russia to finalize the draft of cease-fire signed by Georgia and Russia after a week of Russia offensive in Georgia. US, British and French diplomats want immediate Russia withdrawal from Georgia and seek that both warring parties return to the position where they are before the start of the crisis. Obviously most of the UNSC members stand pole apart to Russia on the Georgian issue.

USA/Canada

Announcing his Vice has been something many democrats are waiting for. Obama has kept many in the wonderland waiting for who will match him in the bid for the White House comes November. Although names have been vetted and the likelihood of Senator Joe Biden is on many minds as Obama staff were reported to have mentioned. Obama was believed to have narrowed his list to Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine, Delaware Sen. Joe Biden, Indiana Sen. Evan Bayh, Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, a prominent Hispanic with vast international experience. While it seemed increasingly unlikely that he would choose his vanquished rival, New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, some Democrats speculated Monday that he could pull a surprise and pick her. Obama's staff debated who would make the right choice. Many said if the candidate asked them, they would suggest Biden because of his foreign policy experience and strong debate skills; Sebelius because she's a respected Washington outsider who has won a Republican state; or Bayh because he can appeal to Democrats uneasy about Obama and could help him win Indiana. Each candidate could pose problems, too. An Obama-Sebelius ticket would be especially light on international experience. Bayh supported the Iraq war; Obama did not and has said that is a leading indicator of judgment. Republicans are already envisioning their response to a Biden pick Obama is so inexperienced that he had to pick someone with a 26-year record in Senate. Biden has spent a longer time on Capitol Hill than McCain, they point out, which doesn't exactly represent the kind of change Obama says is needed in Washington.

Most democrats see the possibility of Joe Biden taking the position of the Vice president and as Obama running mate. Although Obama is keeping his decision quiet, but his staff in Chicago and party activists who await a decision are buzzing about Biden in large part because he can address two of Obama's biggest weaknesses his lack of experience, especially on world affairs, and his reluctance to go on the attack. Biden might be seen as the best choice as he would be ready for a tough fight which Obama has avoided as he claims he there should be a politics of civility. Biden returned Monday from a trip to Georgia at the invitation of the embattled country's president, a well-timed reminder of the value he could bring to Obama's ticket. Fighting between Georgia and Russia has only increased the sense that Americans will turn to the candidate they believe will be a strong international leader. McCain brings a military background and leadership on the Senate Armed Services Committee. Obama only has served three years in Washington, but Biden is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he has served for 33 years.

As the week ends Obama finally chose Sen. Joe Biden as his vice and running mate. The selection received approval from many democrats and even Clinton who was beaten by Obama during the primaries. Selection of Biden was taken on by the republican against

Obama as the newly selected Vice has once questioned Obama readiness for the presidency.

Political attack continues between the two supposedly nominees of both republican and democrat parties. Both have been airing ads that criticized the other's policy and ambition upon elected as the next American president. Poll shows that Obama is leading McCain with little margin and the republican nominee is gaining more strength among traditional republican supporters. The fight is becoming tougher in the run-up for conventions of the two parties. Similarly polls show that McCain has been more critical with negative ads than what Obama has aired, and that creates some fear among democrats whether Obama is really ready to hard hit McCain in this same manner. Obama recent ads tell of McCain as no different from Bush, out of touch from the plight of most Americans and supportive of corporations which characterized the Bush administration. Democrats felt this might hurt McCain, although the latter is pushing hard to absolve himself from Bush policy.

United States and Poland finally inked an agreement on the recent deal of installing missile defense system in Poland. The deal according to Rice, the Secretary of State (US) is aimed at no one, yet Russian officials contend the system to be based in Poland lacks "any target other than Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles," Thus "In this case Russia will be forced to react, and not only through diplomatic" channels, it said without elaborating. Meanwhile Rice responded "It's also the case that when you threaten Poland, you perhaps forget that it is not 1988," Rice said. "It's 2008 and the United States has a ... firm treaty guarantee to defend Poland's territory as if it was the territory of the United States. So it's probably not wise to throw these threats around."

In the same way Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told Rice after the signing "We have achieved our main goals, which means that our country and the United States will be more secure,". Many Poles agreed. "After what happened in Georgia, I believe that this is good protection for us," said Kazimierz Dziuba, 49, a hospital worker in Warsaw. The Georgian conflict "made the Americans agree to this deal sooner because the Russians are getting too bossy," Dziuba said. However this does not mean all Poles were happy, for instance Alina Kesek, an 82-year-old retired office clerk who lived through World War II, when Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union divided Poland between them, and then experienced four decades of Moscow-dominated communist rule, said the Patriot missiles were a "kind of provocation" toward Russia. "This means a threat from the Russian side," said Kesek. "I am not very pleased with this deal."

A group of Southern California interfaith leaders and community activists sent a joint letter to the office of Rep. Ed Royce (R-Fullerton) urging him to stop using language that links the faith of Islam to terrorism. In recent newsletters and speeches, Rep. Royce has repeatedly used phrases such as "Islamist terrorism" to refer to acts of violence and terror. In the letter, local interfaith and community leaders stated: "Congressman Royce, using this type of language may not only offend and alienate the overwhelming majority of Muslims, who abhor violence, but it may also unintentionally legitimize terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and other anti-American forces. ... "According to the Homeland Security recommendations, by using phrases like 'Islamic terrorism,' U.S. officials and representatives may be 'unintentionally portraying terrorists, who lack moral and religious legitimacy, as brave fighters, legitimate soldiers or spokesman for ordinary Muslims.' "The report also urges 'caution in using terms such as 'jihadist,' 'Islamist,' and 'holy warrior' as grandiose descriptions,' to avoid associating acts of violence or terrorism with religious concepts." "Stereotyping or profiling, though easily done, is destructive to human relations that are needed to bring about understanding, justice, and peace," said Dr. Ed Linberg, Associate Pastor of First Christian Church in Fullerton. Rabbi Steven Jacobs, founder of the Progressive Faith Foundation, added: "American Jews are all too familiar with institutional bigotry. It is alarming that an elected official uses Muslims as political scapegoats associated with global tragedies including terrorism and war to instill fear and hatred. We, in the Interfaith Community, condemn this policy of divide and conquer for political purposes. We welcome Congressman Royce to sit with us and learn the art of cooperation, not confrontation." "There is nothing 'Islamic' about terrorism," said Hussam Ayloush, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Greater Los Angeles Area. "It is offensive and wrong to make such an association, whether it is done by the terrorists themselves or our elected officials."

The idea of an annual Sunday get-together at a North Seattle mosque stemmed from an incident two days after the Sept. 11 attacks. A man splashed gasoline on cars in the Idriss Mosque parking lot and started to flee. When congregants followed him, he turned and fired shots into the ground. It was the first local hate crime after the attacks. Neighbors stood watch at the mosque 24 hours a day. Thousands of people came by, flooding the congregation with flowers and cards to show them not everyone was filled with hate. As part of an ongoing "thank you," mosque director Hisham Farajallah and others organized a neighborhood barbecue, inviting everyone with hopes they'd break down stereotypes. The first year, about 100 people showed. On Sunday, the Muslim community welcomed more than 800 throughout the afternoon, including hundreds from outside their congregation. "This is our goal," said Farajallah, a Boeing engineer by day. "To get people to know and understand each other."

According to the recent Pew survey it is becoming alarming that religion is greatly influencing politics than expected in the United States and voters particularly

conservatives want religion out of social and political sphere. On this question, the gap between conservatives and liberals is narrowing: just four years ago, liberals were twice as likely as conservatives to say churches should stay out of politics. Now, 50 percent of conservatives and 57 percent of liberals think that. Four years ago, 62 percent of liberals opposed church involvement in politics. Democrats and Republicans are about even on the question, as well. The survey also found largely unchanged attitudes along religious lines on the presidential choices compared with 2004, despite Democrat Barack Obama's strong play for religious voters and Republican John McCain's hesitancy to talk about his own faith and problems connecting with his party's evangelical base. McCain leads Obama 68 percent to 24 percent among white evangelical Protestants, comparable to what President Bush was polling four years ago. But the support is tepid: just 28 percent of white evangelicals call themselves "strong" supporters of McCain, well short of Bush's 57 percent in 2004. Changing attitudes about mixing church and politics could emerge as a factor in the fall campaign — particularly for McCain. Both campaigns are plotting get-out-the-vote efforts in faith communities, but past Republican successes came when attitudes were more welcoming.

The attitude shift cut across conservative constituencies: 46 percent of Republican Protestants want churches out of politics, up from 28 percent in 2004. Thirty-six percent of white evangelical Republicans hold that view, up from 20 percent four years ago. The question asked specifically about places of worship, which by law cannot take stands for or against candidates or political parties but may speak out on issues. So the public might hold different views about political stances taken by religious leaders speaking as individuals or religious advocacy groups. The findings come after midterm elections in 2006 that saw Democrats seize control of Congress, a landmark court ruling this year legalizing gay marriage in California, and also amid an identity crisis among conservative evangelicals about which issues should take priority and who speaks for the movement.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper aide last week reiterated the position of the PM that with the way things are run in the parliament there is likelihood of an election. The aide said "If there is no consensus, I think it leads us on a path of going to the polls in the near future,"....."If we're all agreed we're going to the polls, then why wait another two months before getting the nation's business done?" Harper has governed so far mainly with the tacit support of the main opposition Liberal Party but complains of what he says is obstructionism. Liberal leader Stephane Dion has said he is willing to meet Harper but he appeared in no hurry to speed things along. "What's the rush?" asked Dion spokesman Mark Dunn. "Canadians elected a minority government, not a majority. Harper is manufacturing a crisis about Parliament not working." Harper now appears ready to have Parliament dissolved if necessary before its scheduled September 15 return from its summer recess, with a general election possible before the November 4 presidential election in the United States. By law, Canadian campaigns must be at least 36 days long and elections are usually on a Monday. If Parliament were dissolved on September 14, for example, that would make an election likely on October 20. If an election is held, Dion will run on a proposal to impose a carbon tax to combat climate change, offset with

income tax cuts and help for the poor. Harper opposes that, saying it is important to deal with the environment but in a way that does not send the economy into a tailspin.

The Canadian government along with its criminal intelligence services indicated that Canada is one of the top three world suppliers of the psychedelic drug ecstasy, and a significant supplier of marijuana to the United States. A survey of organized crime by Criminal Intelligence Services Canada found that Canada, the Netherlands and Belgium were the primary sources of ecstasy, an illegal drug that's popular at clubs, raves and rock concerts." Canada continues to be a major producer for both domestic and international markets, exporting significant quantities primarily to the U.S. and to a lesser extent, Japan, Australia and New Zealand," the report said. Echoing U.S. concern, it noted ecstasy was now being made with larger quantities of the more-addictive methamphetamine than was the case in the past, making the drug more dangerous. The annual report said organized crime was involved extensively at all levels of producing, distributing and exporting Canadian marijuana. But it noted that Canadian marijuana met only "a small proportion" of U.S. supply, compared to domestic U.S. production and drugs imported from Mexico. Police figures estimate that Canada produces as much as 3,500 tons of marijuana a year, most of it grown in British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario. But the 2006 report said marijuana seizures had fallen since 2003, in part because growers have exported their "technical expertise" to set up grow-ops in the United States. Friday's latest report, compiled with the assistance of law enforcement agencies across the country, also estimated that 22 percent of all cigarettes smoked in Canada are illegal, perhaps smuggled into the country to avoid heavy excise duties.

Oceania

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: September 5, 2008

South, Central America and the Caribbean

By: Bakare Najimdeen

Period: From 24-30 August

Headlines

Caribbean Island

- The Gustav storm and the Caribbean Island
- Haiti edges toward ending four-month govt impasse
- Jamaica: Govt. to provide help for persons affected by Gustav

Central America

- Central American FMs meet for social development program

South America

- Brazil admits Amazon deforestation on the rise
- Brazilian intelligence agency has been accused of illegal wiretaps
- Chavez supports Moscow's stance
- War games claim
- Drought threatens Argentine farms economy

Report Detail

Caribbean Island

Natural force and its disastrous consequence belie the effectiveness of modern scientific technology. Stopping the forces of nature from causing havoc is no doubt serious concern for governments across the natural disastrous prone regions. The Gustav storm hit the Caribbean, Central America and crossing towards North America. The storm has wrecked some damage in Jamaica and Cuba the most and as it move towards the USA, officers and the locals have started nurturing the fear that a repetition of Hurricane Katrina might be seen. The fear prompted Sen. John McCain asking the Republican Party to postpone Republican convention. The Bush administration is equally mounting effort to disperse the wrong impression held of his administration during the Katrina trauma.

Hurricane Gustav rapidly gained strength causing ruin on western Cuba after ripping through the Cayman Islands, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica, leaving 85 people dead. "Data from an Air Force reconnaissance aircraft indicate that Gustav continues to rapidly strengthen and now has maximum winds 115 miles (185 kilometres) per hour with higher gusts," the US National Hurricane Centre said.

The western province of Pinar del Rio and the Isle of Youth in the south were put on the highest level of weather alert. Tens of thousands of residents were asked to leave their homes in advance of Gustav, which was forecast to hit Cuba later Saturday. Gustav brushed past the Cayman Islands late Friday, with no immediate reports of casualties or damage. Barrelling earlier across Jamaica, however, it killed at least 11 people. In Haiti, it left 66 dead plus 10 missing. In the neighbouring Dominican Republic, the death toll stood at eight.

Jamaican Prime Minister Bruce Golding told reporters Friday that the storm had displaced between 3,500 and 4,000 people in his Caribbean island nation. "I am concerned that there are still a number of persons who are still unaccounted for," Golding said. Streets in the normally bustling capital Kingston were soaked and reeking with the stench from overflowing sewers. Powerful gusts sent metal roofs flying and threatened to wreak havoc on banana production. Although the heaviest of the rains had subsided, many Jamaicans worried about returning home. "It is all wet and I am afraid to sleep inside there," said Kingston housewife Charlene Markland.

In Cuba, a fragile and aging housing stock is highly vulnerable to hurricanes. More than two million people live in the capital Havana, where many colonial-era buildings, crowded with families, are prone to cave-ins. Anxiety meanwhile grew on the American side of the Gulf of Mexico. In New Orleans, officials began busing out residents on a voluntary basis in anticipation of Gustav, and considered mandatory evacuations to prevent a repeat of the devastation and deaths of 2005.

It was moving northwest at around 19 kilometres (12 miles) per hour. If it keeps its

present course, the centre said, it could hit Louisiana the same state hard hit by Katrina in the early hours of Tuesday.

Haiti's Senate and lower house both approved the nomination of economist Michele Pierre-Louis as prime minister last month, tentatively clearing way for her to replace outgoing Jacques Edouard Alexis and form a new government in the impoverished Caribbean country. The lower house of parliament approved a formal policy declaration from Haiti's new prime minister on Friday, as lawmakers moved to end an impasse that began in April when the previous government was ousted over food price riots. Alexis was fired by the Senate in April after violence triggered by soaring food prices and living costs that took at least seven lives.

Before her nomination to replace Alexis, Pierre-Louis served as the director of a foundation that provides libraries, youth education programs and women's networks in the impoverished Caribbean country. "My priorities will be national production, particularly food production, job creation, security and the establishment of an environment favorable to national and foreign investment," Pierre-Louis told reporters. "We have to urgently deal with the food crisis, the high cost of living and provide social alternatives for the most vulnerable."

In Jamaica the government of Prime Minister Bruce Golding has said he would be providing assistance to communities and persons, who sustained damage, dislocation and losses during the passage of Tropical Storm Gustav. Addressing journalists at a media briefing at Jamaica House, today (August 29), Mr. Golding said the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has been instructed to conduct investigations into reports of deaths in the Kintyre and Tavern communities in St. Andrew, in order to provide assistance to persons, who are reported to have lost family members and friends. Several houses in both communities reportedly collapsed and fell into the Hope River, which is adjacent to both areas. He also advised that assistance would be forthcoming to persons who lost houses. "Those persons, whose houses were lost, we will be investigating those cases to try to assist them as quickly as possible, in relocating them to safer ground, and assisting them to provide proper shelter for themselves," the Prime Minister informed. He also expressed condolences to the persons who lost family members and friends. However, Mr. Golding emphasised that firm action would be taken to prevent further construction of houses along the Hope River. He noted that houses have been constructed in areas not suitable for such development, and lamented that over time, the river has undermined those structures, endangering the lives of the occupants.

The ACP nations are mulling over the agreement signed with the European Commission which according to President Jagdeo of Guyana "Europe had all the cards. They have negotiated in bad faith. We have been bullied into this." ACP stands for African, Caribbean and Pacific nations trading with the EU. The concern of this group is that talks on economic partnership agreements have been far from inclusive or transparent. This of course has always characterized the line of argument between the global south and north. From the outset, European commission negotiators approached them as if they were conventional free trade area negotiations focused on market opening, rather than as tools for development. There remains no clarity as to whether poor countries will have longer

to adjust than richer ones, or that the agreements have been tailored to meet the ACP's development needs and objectives. All along the ACP has been told that it has "no choice".

Central America

Foreign ministers from Central American countries gathered in Honduras to discuss the launch of a social development programme in the region. The meeting, chaired by Honduran Foreign Minister Edmundo Orellana, was held in the city of Tela, some 250 km north of the country's capital Tegucigalpa. The programme under discussion includes issues concerning food security, medicine acquisition, protection of AIDS-infected people, and public policies applied to children and teenagers, said the Honduran Vice Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina in Tegucigalpa. The ministers also discussed issues related to land distribution and development, as well as a social housing plan in the region. The agreements reached at the meeting are to be ratified by some member countries of the Central American Integration System (Sica) including Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Dominican Republic

South America

The Brazilian government admitted last week that the Amazon is facing serious deforestation that jumped 69 percent in the past 12 months. The first such increase in three years as rising demand for soy and cattle pushes farmers and ranchers to raze trees, officials said Saturday. Some 3,088 square miles of forest were destroyed between August 2007 and August 2008 — a 69 percent increase over the 1,861 square miles felled in the previous 12 months, according to the National Institute for Space Research, or INPE, which monitors destruction of the Amazon.

"We're not content," Environment Minister Carlos Minc said. "Deforestation has to fall more and the conditions for sustainable development have to improve."

Brazil's government has increased cash payments to fight illegal Amazon logging this year, and it eliminated government bank loans to farmers who illegally clear forest to plant crops. The country lost 2.7 percent of its Amazon rain forest in 2007, or 4,250 square miles. Environmental officials fear even more land will be razed this year — but they have not forecast how much. Minc says monthly deforestation rates have slowed since May, but environmental groups say seasonal shifts in tree cutting make the annual number a more accurate gauge. Most deforestation happens in March and April, the start of Brazil's dry season, and routinely tapers off in May, June and July: Last month, 125 square miles of trees were felled, 61 percent less than the area razed in June.

Environmentalists also argue that INPE's deforestation report wasn't designed to give accurate monthly figures, but to alert and direct the government to deforestation hot spots in time to save the land. The Amazon region covers about 1.6 million square miles of Brazil, nearly 60 percent of the country. About 20 percent of that land has already been deforested.

Still in Brazil, the national intelligence agency will investigate accusations that its agents tapped the phones of top government officials, including the president of the Supreme Court. The Brazilian Intelligence Agency, known by its Portuguese acronym Abin, said in a statement it will also ask the Justice Ministry and other officials to independently look into the case. The news magazine *Veja* reported in its latest edition that Abin agents tapped the phones not only of the Gilmar Mendes, the Supreme Court justice, but of close associates of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and members of Congress. *Veja* reported it received a packet of information from an Abin agent it didn't name that contained evidence the agency routinely carried out illegal wiretaps. Garibaldi Alves, president of Brazil's Senate and another alleged target of the wiretaps, said he'll speak with Mendes on Monday to organize a joint response. The *Veja* article made clear that none of its sources were accusing Silva of having any knowledge of any wiretapping. It was not clear why the taps would have been carried out, though some local media speculate it could be connected to October municipal elections that are seen as a key test of the popularity of Silva's Workers' Party ahead of the 2010 presidential race. Mendes told *Veja* that any wiretapping would be a blow to democracy. "To secretly record the telephone calls of the president of the Supreme Court is something from a totalitarian regime," he was quoted as saying. Mendes said he didn't think the government ordered any wiretaps, but he would ask Silva to investigate and punish those responsible.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez backed Russia's recognition of two breakaway regions of Georgia on Friday, making Venezuela only the second nation to support Moscow's stance. Russia's neighbour and close ally Belarus has expressed similar support for Moscow's decision to back the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia after a brief war between Russia and Georgia this month. "Russia has recognised the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We support Russia. Russia is right and is defending its interests," Chavez said during a televised speech from an oil field along the Orinoco Oil Belt. He stopped short of saying Venezuela recognised the regions. Earlier on Friday, Russia said a security group of former Soviet states that it leads will discuss the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia at a meeting in Moscow next month. Russia's recognition of the two regions, after chasing out Georgian troops trying to retake South Ossetia, plunged relations with the West to new lows. Russia faced increased diplomatic isolation over its actions this week, with Asian allies failing to offer support and France saying EU leaders were considering sanctions. Chavez, a fierce critic of the US who has strengthened ties with Moscow in recent years, says Washington is using its ally Georgia to weaken a resurgent Russia. Chavez has bought billions of dollars of weapons from Russia and supports its increased role on the world stage as a counter-balance to the US.

Still in Venezuela a video game depicting mercenaries storming Venezuela has been criticised by the country as a blueprint for an invasion. The game will be released by a US company this weekend. The game, 'Mercenaries 2: World in Flames', will be released today by a division of Electronic Arts Inc and is set in a "fully destructible Venezuela", the company said. A power hungry tyrant uses Venezuela's oil supply to overthrow the government and turns the country into a war zone," the company says of

the game on its web site. In 2006, when the game was first announced, lawmakers from Chavez's coalition called it an example of a US government-inspired propaganda campaign against Chavez that could even help lay the psychological groundwork for an actual invasion. "All the controversy around this is kind of comical," Electronic Arts spokesman Jeff Brown said. "At the end of the day you have to remind yourself it's a damned video game." The government said it could not immediately comment on the game's release. A trailer for the game, set in 2010, features mercenaries with American accents storming oil installations during a bloody coup by a tyrant called Ramon Solano. "It is time the Venezuelan people stop paying for the greed of foreign interests, we will make them pay dearly for our oil. From this day forward everybody pays," the character says before shots of helicopter gunships and tanks attacking familiar Venezuelan landscapes. Chavez has nationalised oil projects owned by US companies like Exxon and ConocoPhillips.

In Argentina the worst drought in 20 years is wracking Argentina, stalling the country's conflict-ridden farm economy just as the government needs agricultural export income to protect its budget surplus at a politically troubled time. The National Meteorological Service says nearly every part of Argentina is experiencing drought conditions - ranked as "extreme" or "absolute" in most areas - that already have killed thousands of cattle and withered crops. The damage is worst in the country's northern farm belt, which for decades has produced the bulk of Argentine agriculture, fueling the nation's growth.

"There isn't enough food for animals to graze and there are water shortages for the population," National Meteorological Service spokeswoman Susana Gordillo said Saturday. "The panorama doesn't look like it's going to get better." Argentina is among the world's top four exporters of beef, wheat, soy and corn, and sagging output could not only cripple the local economy, but boost already-high world food prices.

About 4.5 million hectares of wheat are now growing nationwide, 19 percent less than last year, and the smallest amount since 1974, the Buenos Aires Grain Exchange said in a report. Local newspapers are already comparing the dry spell to a severe drought that swept the country in the 1988-89 growing season, killing crops and slashing exports amid a domestic economic crisis that included 5,000 percent hyperinflation. This year, economic losses in the farming provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Corrientes and Rio Negro have already reached US\$293 million, and wheat- and corn-related losses could top US\$700 million nationwide, according to an estimate by the Buenos Aires-based La Nacion newspaper. The paper said that in many spots, annual rainfall is now 20 to 30 percent below its normal level. Argentina's powerful farm sector hit the economy earlier this year with a four-month series of strikes, as grain farmers suspended shipments to protest an export-tax hike decreed in March by President Cristina Fernandez to boost government revenue. Exports and tax income fell during the protest and the government was forced to back down on the tax plan. Fernandez's approval ratings dipped to near 20 percent in several July polls.

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: September 12, 2008

South, Central America and the Caribbean

By: Bakare Najimdeen

Period: From 31st -6th August 2008

Articles Reviewed

Article One: Is Latin America Doomed to Failure?

Author: Peter Hakim is president of the Inter-American Dialogue.

Source: Foreign Policy, No. 117 (Winter, 1999-2000)

Published by: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Jstor Journal Article

Peter is the vice president of the Inter-American Foundation and worked for the Ford Foundation in both New York and Latin America. He has taught at MIT and Columbia. He has served on boards and advisory committees for the World Bank, Council on Competitiveness, Inter-American Development Bank, Foreign Affairs en Español, Partners for International Change, and Human Rights Watch. He is a member of the Council of Foreign Relations.

The article that dissected the socio-political and economic future of Latin America, how far the region has attained the hyperbolic political development or is it doomed to failure. The article reminiscence into the past of the region as it was defined by civil strife, guerilla war disturbances, economic instability and military coup. The region transited for a democracy but yet still haunted by its past, as such democratic principles are yet to be fully manifested owing to conflicting interest and stakeholders manipulating the politics of the region. There was great expectation from the region with the hope of matching up with the Asian Tigers' development instead the economic was waylaid by compelling forces. Since many believe in democracy as the hallmark of good governance but with the dearth of things in Latin American countries the people became wary of democracy and would rather entertain any form of government that would ameliorate their plights. As democracy fails in Latin America as a result of the way it is being practiced, populist and authoritarian government had inroad into different countries of the region with the intention of turning things around. Nevertheless the fulfillment of such promises hangs in the air. The bottom-line argument of the article is that the region has the potential of

joining the wagon of economic great region if truly the government would seriously practice the free-market economy championed by Washington. Similarly the writer believe political instability can cease to exist if serious democratic precepts are allowed to manifest and social inequality that has long characterized the region be eradicated.

It however remains noticeable that state of affairs in the region has shifted from the outlook of the article owing to the fact that it was written almost a decade back. Latin America nevertheless has relatively recorded success which should not be underplayed. The region has garner more international attention and continued to play significant role in championing troubling issues such as climate change, energy crisis and economic inequality between the global north and south. It has also recorded a fairly good economy inspite many hurdles, although the region remains under the tutelage of socialist leaders questioning the meddling tactics of Washington in the region.

Latin American in the recent times has become more fraternized owing to the different form of cooperation ensuing among the states, and most particularly is the EU type of union recently created in South America spearheaded by the Brazilian government. Similarly it has welcomed more of democratic government although it might not match the liberal democracy of the west yet it takes the shape of competitive authoritarian democracy identified by some analysts. The region particularly South America has seen more of indigenus political and economic participation owing to the socialist policies of the governments.

Article Two: The European Union and Democracy in Latin America

Author(s): Richard Youngs Source: Latin American Politics and Society, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Autumn, 2002)

Published by: Distributed by Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the School of international Studies, University of Miami in Jstor Journal Article

Richard Youngs is Senior Research Fellow and Coordinator of the Democratisation programme at FRIDE. He also lectures at the University of Warwick in the UK. He studied at Cambridge (BA Hons) and Warwick (MA, PhD) universities.

Young's article was a comparison of the democratic venture of both the EU and US in Latin America. The article made a clear distinction between the democratic practices of

both of these powers. According to him, the US approach has always been top-down, while the EU believes in bottom-up democratic reform in Latin America. Obviously both of these approaches have their weak and strong points. Yet the deducible fact is that the EU approach seems to be more tender and welcoming than the US confrontational approach. The former approach is often geared at impacting the civil society as avenue to effectively effect a change. Similarly the top-down design of the US is usually seen by many of the Latin American government as meddling in internal affairs. Yet that does not mean that the tender approach of the EU which believes in the bottom-up does not have its own limitation. The region sees the EU approach as foreign influence on Westernized NGOs and local NGOs as EU fund and aids are often directed at NGOs having some affiliation with the Western world. This kind of situation hampers government readiness to accept reform, as in foreign funding of NGOs, usually democratic promotion can be seen as meddling in domestic politics.

Hence Young argues that owing to the weak sides of the two approaches a balanced democracy promotion policy in Latin America should combine bottom-up civil society and economic assistance with top-down political society work focused on political parties, local governments, the role of legislatures, and the accessibility of state institutions. Of course it would be hard to throw away the positive aspect of the EU democratic promotion that has been the broadest and densest frameworks of cooperation in Latin America, involving NGOs, parliamentarians, unions, business organizations, and cultural bodies.

It also came forth from the article that EU aid to Latin America had some rationales behind it. One is the fact that Europeans are interested cultural proliferation. Two, at a particular point in time European Commission aid going to Latin America actually increased from 4.3 percent to 5 percent over the first half of the decade as the shares going to Asia and sub-Saharan Africa declined. The question one would ask is why this change, answer to that rest in the growing status of the region, cultural and colonial linkage as in Spain. Hence as the EU build a cultural proximity with the region; its aid was marked by a focus on institution building and the post-conflict fostering of democratic procedure.

The argument of the US against the EU approach is that the latter has not being that tough on the governments of this region, however there were some amount of punitive measures such as suspension of aid, in order to make the government change their course. The rationale behind the moderation of EU is having a positive engagement with the government as that could be more effective than outright confrontation. Similarly the EU tries to link economics with politics, by dragging the region into the global economy; this would make Latin American governments aware of the demand of global democracy

By and large the struggle for "spheres of influence" resonates in the actions of both the US and EU. Similarly it was not as if the region is lip-glued having no observation or resentment in view of its dealing with either the EU or US. Accordingly, the issue of trade inequality between global north and south kept repeating itself. The region sees an asymmetry relation in its commercial dealing with powers.

The European Union has developed a programme of democracy assistance of similar magnitude to the United States, one that has incorporated a distinctive range of work linking local-level capacity building with social development objectives. There is significant compatibility between E.U. policies and theorists' advocacy of democracy promotion strategies geared to the construction of "consent" behind political reform.

In a nutshell, both effort of the EU and US obviously complements each other and are geared towards the same direction.

Article Three: War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America

Author(s): Cameron G. Thies

Source: American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Jul., 2005), pp. 451-465
Published by: Midwest Political Science Association in Jstor Journal Article

Cameron G. Thies (Associate Professor) joined the Department since 2006. He received his Ph.D. in 1999 from Arizona State University and specializes in International Political Economy.

The article critically compared the nations in Latin America and Europe in view of state building. The thrust of the argument is that it would be wrong placing Latin America on the same level with the European countries when taking about state building. The Bellicist Approaches to State Building became the template for analysis. According to this approach state is formed based on the belligerent nature of state to attack another state, and by so doing would have to mobilize the public and invest heavily so has to win the campaign. It also goes forth with the view that institutional arrangement in Europe cannot be abreast with the state of affairs in Latin America; this of course enabled Europeans to war among themselves while such dearth was of disadvantage for the Latinos. More importantly since war would necessity the consensus of stakeholders within the society, the internal fracas among the Latinos power brokers could not facilitate any form for external aggression.

This argument stands true of many nations in Europe; however the article tries to exculpate Latin America from such paradigm. Instead it was noted that Latin American

nations historically have internal problem which of course would not allow any form of external aggression or campaign. The article also argues that the pattern of development and way of socio-political and economic governance in these two regions are quite distinctive. Hence the argument further goes that war should not be necessarily seen as the precursor for state building instead the far of war itself can also fan the interest of building a state.

However the article never discredited or dismissed some significant internal strife and interstate wars that ensued among the Latinos in the latter part of the 19th and 20th centuries. In fact the argument of the contemporary Latin America is that race for economic superiority can be identified as one of those factors that causes interstate strife in the region.

Article Four: Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

Author(s): Marc Morjé Howard and Philip G. Roessler

Source: American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Apr., 2006), pp. 365-381

Published by: Midwest Political Science Association in Jstor Journal Article

Marc Morje Howard is an Associate Professor of Government at Georgetown University

Philip Roessler is the Andrew Mellon Post-doctoral Fellow in Comparative Government University of Maryland

The article took a comparative study of governments in Asia, Africa, Eurasia and Latin America. The article highlighted that these regions are characterized by governmental systems that are not democratic. While some practices authoritarianism others enforce something having some similarity with liberal democracy of the west. The article however noted that many states are now adopting liberal democratic principles but still failing to really implement the system in its real form. This according to the article is termed competitive authoritarianism, a situation leading to a de facto one-party state. Even in some countries where the system is relaxed the de facto does not really give a fair treatment to the opposition. Whether in Latin America, Africa, or Eurasia, recalcitrant authoritarian leaders discovered ways to acquiesce to internal and external demands for democratization while still maintaining their hold on power.

The major view of the article is that there are lot of factors that help authoritarian system become relaxed and such relaxation leads to Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes. This was the term coined by the authors in that electoral results changes from the expectation of the incumbent in view of that atmosphere of relaxation.

It is this climate of relaxation that is also termed competitive authoritarian, whereby new government tends to do much better than the previous government. The article however identified several imperatives that could cause this change to happen. Accordingly it identified opposition coalition which has been one of the avenue used in all the developing countries to unseat the de facto authoritarian government. Similarly such coalition in itself would prove abortive with a strong and virile opposition mobilization, hence they have to play a grassroot politics as the authoritarian is often not interested or liked by the grassroot. With the relaxed atmosphere opposition along with the leniency of the incumbent begins to create political institutions that often galvanize the effort of the opposition.

Inspite all of the efforts of the opposition to unseat the incumbent the prevailing situation in most of the countries studied is the incumbent turnover. The latter would always create hurdles that would prevent oppositions challenging their position and even would resist international pressure. Hence the situation is that the incumbent remains in power through electoral fraud and manipulation of events prior and after election.

But the power of the incumbent is always challenged further by the leadership of the opposition when there is economic problem in the country. This often gives opportunity to the opposition to mobilize the people against the government regardless of the government apparatus to stop the advancement of the opposition. Furthermore authoritarian system becomes competitive authoritarian when there is much of international and global pressure. The fact that the world is interdependent and no country can live in isolation makes the government dance to the tune of the global community for democratization.

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Weekly Presentation: September 27, 2008

South, Central America and Caribbean

By: Bakare Najimdeen

Period: From 14th -20th September 2008

Article One: Authoritarian Attitudes, Democracy, and Policy Preferences among Latin American Elites

Author(s): Daniel Stevens, Benjamin G. Bishin, Robert R. Barr

- Daniel Stevens is assistant professor of political science, Hartwick College, Oneonta, New York
- Benjamin Bishin is assistant professor of political science, University of Miami.
- Robert Barr is assistant professor of political science and international affairs, University of Mary Washington.

Source: American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Jul., 2006), pp. 606-620

Published by: Midwest Political Science Association in Jstor

The article describes Latin American as transitional democracies as opposed to the established democracy of North America for many reasons. Latin American transitional democracies are still lacking full fleshed democratic principles and such dearth often influences the masses to prefer authoritarian government believe of having the will to alleviate their economic problem over the democratic governments.

Authoritarianism not simply a state centric phenomenon it also has the non-state participation. Obviously authoritarian value shared between the state and no-state elites indicate the no-room picture for democracy in the region.

Elite attitude and authoritarianism in Latin America has somewhat become institutionalized; however elites are more tolerant than the masses. Elite value in the region has been studied as influential on masses political orientation

Elite authoritarianism is termed as Iberian heritage, as civic culture is lacking in Latin America, hence projected the view for authoritarian over democratic system, such heritage is linked to the religious and colonial past of the region. Although survey data shows that certain countries exemplify idiosyncratic value making them distinctive and opposing the general perception that authoritarianism is an umbrella projection for the whole region.

The argument for authoritarianism in the region was unearthed through the survey of 537 Latin American elites in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela conducted by the University of Miami/Zogby Latin American Elite Poll- in September 2003. The nation with the most authoritarian group of elites is Colombia, Argentina, Chile while Brazil, closely followed by Mexico, however it worth mentioning that the presence of an authoritarian government is not an indication of elite authoritarianism or the other way around. Even though Venezuela has a profound authoritarian government that does not translate to the preponderance of elite authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is indicated by submission and conventionalism and urge to punish non-conformist. Authoritarian elite would always want social order and norms to be conserved and prone to be tolerant with their sympathizers within the elite club. They often internalization the basic democratic values like tolerance, egalitarianism, and the rule of law practiced among them.

Ideology and threat seem to influence authoritarianism, while political awareness and individual background do not. Right wing political leaning is more prone to authoritarianism than the leftist socialist.

The summation is that authoritarian government believes more in social order in order to preserve the system and tend to be more lenient on economic policy. Since economic insecurity as in unemployment could precipitate social disorder hence authoritarian government in the region would prefer attending to the socio-economic problem of the people in order to avoid social instability.

Article Two: Democratic Transitions

Author(s): David L. Epstein, Robert Bates, Jack Goldstone, Ida Kristensen, Sharyn O'Halloran

- David L. Epstein, Ida Kristensen and Sharyn O'Halloran, Department of Political Science, Columbia University
- Robert Bates Department of Government, Harvard University
- Jack Goldstone School of Public Policy, George Mason University

Source: American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Jul., 2006), pp. 551-569

Published by: Midwest Political Science Association in Jstor

Transition democracies has lot of names among which illiberal democracy, partial democracy, they exist between autocracy and democracy hence making them transitional in nature and distinctive in all features when compared with either autocracy and democracy. The article tries to support the idea that economic development (as in increase in per capita income) facilitates democratization process while a decrease reverses the process.

The article advances the argument of Przeworski et al. (2000) that increase GDP would have no relation in the transition from autocracy to democracy. Przeworski et al. (2000) rather hold that GDP would sustain democracy from backsliding to autocracy. This argument obviously challenges the conventional wisdom of economic growth spurring democracy.

Przeworski et al. (2000) argue that If (1) the chief executive is elected; (2) the legislature is elected; (3) there is more than one political party; and (4) an incumbent regime has lost power, then the country is deemed democratic; otherwise, it is classified authoritarian. While the authors used the Polity score based on three components: measures of executive constraints, political competition, and the quality of political participation. In autocracies, the executive retains a high level of political discretion, often due to the absence of a strong judiciary or powerful legislature. There is no organized competition for political office. And political participation is orchestrated by those who hold power. In full democracies, the executive faces binding constraints on the use of power; there are institutionalized forms of political competition; and citizens openly propound and associations openly champion civic causes.

The article equally argues that a country previous democratic experience could be responsible for dragging passage towards full flesh democracy, particularly when that

experience is bad. Latin American countries have one time or the other experiment democracy but failed hence such experience daunts both the masses and the elites as seen that the former would sometime prefer authoritarian over a democratic government. However such view should not mislead us to the view that failed democratic experience is an indication for democracy rather according to Tobit Regression Analysis of factors affecting democratic transitions countries that experience previous falls from democracy tend to be more democratic.

The position of the article that tallies with Przeworski et al. (2000) is that as country's income increases it reduces the chances of moving out of democracy. Nevertheless the point of difference between the article and Przeworski et al. (2000) is that increase GDP is response for the transition from autocracy to democracy. The article methodological analysis was geared at reestablishing the convention wisdom that economic growth has role to play in democratization. It also established the view that increase GDP will help consolidate existing democracy and dissuade partial democracy from backsliding to authoritarian system.

The article is also important as it helped in understanding the essence of the partial democracy and shifted attention just from studying democracy and authoritarianism, by so doing the distinctiveness of this trichotomy was underscored.

Article Three: Political Knowledge and Issue Voting among the Latino Electorate

Author(s): Stephen P. Nicholson, Adrian Pantoja, Gary M. Segura

- Stephen p. Nicholson, university of California,
- Adrian Pantoja, Pitzer College
- Gary m. Segura, university of Washington

Source: Political Research Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Jun., 2006), pp. 259-271

The article underlies education and cultural symbolism as two major determinant factors for the voting pattern of Latinos in the US. The educated Latinos are prone to vote premised on policy issue while semi-literate or less sees cultural and religious affiliation as decisive factor. However this should not mislead to the conclusion that voters with

higher education vote issue-wise, research have shown that inspite the high level of education in the United States voters are still lacking issue-base voting.

Political orientation of the country is known through the political knowledge of the citizens and which manifest itself via political participation. Average Americans are seen lacking this orientation particularly on policy-wise voting. African American and Latinos have been identified falling mostly in this bracket. Due to their largely apolitical nature are incapable of effectively receiving and processing political communications.

Latinos are an emerging political force in U.S. politics and one that both parties see as a viable constituency given that two-fifths of Latinos are foreign-born, though this particular group lacks political knowledge for political socialization enjoyed by most Americans. Yet like other minority their vote is considerably undisputable. The fact remains that America-born Latinos are more political inclined as compared to foreign born Latinos prone to be apolitical.

The article was able to identify issue, candidate likeability, candidate's Spanish language and leaning and partisan identity as determinants tailoring Latinos votes in the United States. These determinant factors obviously transpire between both the politically knowledgeable and informed. By and large the politically knowledgeable is more likely to make value judgment and vote issue-wise.

The intriguing aspect of this article rests on the fact minority in any giving society have always exercise their political consciousness and participation multidimensional. The same will be true of African Americans so will it be true of the Muslim American community as observed by Professor Ali Mansury. The Muslim American community swings their vote based on issue, candidate likeability, cultural sensitivity and religious understanding of the candidate or party.

Article Four: The Role of Group Consciousness in Latino Public Opinion

Author(s): Gabriel R. Sanchez

- Gabriel r. Sanchez, University of New Mexico

Source: Political Research Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Sep., 2006), pp. 435-446

The main direction and point of argument of the article is that group consciousness influences the political attitudes of Latinos, particularly when the policy area is directly tied to the Latino community. Group consciousness is a resource that generates political activity through an individual's attachment to a group. The article tries to argue that the more affinity to group the more the sense of togetherness and possibly ability to have a public political space.

The article based its argument on the 1999 nationally representative survey of 2,417 Latinos conducted by the Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University

The issue of abortion, death penalty and language was identified as issues salient to the Latino community than other ethnic minority. Strong cultural attachment makes Latinos issue oriented as an indication for identity. Such propensity facilitates the urge to have their own language recognized by the larger society, hence always in support of bilingual society. This becomes salient as the Latino community appears ready to pay more tax if the government would ensure a bilingual schooling system. However one must not fence the fact that Latino attitudes toward abortion are split across several factors, including national origin, nativity, and religious preference.

Aside from this, the issue of immigration is also important because of the economic string. Yet there is divergent view on immigration among the Latinos this of course is spread across social status, age and country of origin. Meanwhile accommodation of immigrants is noted most among Latinos than other ethnic minorities in the US. Yet the fact is that Latinos of Caribbean origin prefers decrease in immigration owing to the fact that they see new arrivals as competitors. This is quite opposite to other Latinos wanting more arrival.

Religiosity is another factor mentioned in the article as deciding factor for making public decision. The fact that most Latinos are Catholic speaks of the fact that they formulate their view around the Catholic worldview.

The final summation of article is that group consciousness was instrumental in understanding Latinos public opinion in the larger American politics.

Article Five: Is Democracy Good for the Poor?

Author(s): Michael Ross

- Michael Ross is associate professor of political science, University of California, Los Angeles

Source: American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 50, No. 4 (Oct., 2006), pp. 860-874

Published by: Midwest Political Science Association

The crux of the article is that it is hard to pin down the fact that democratic regime does better than a non-democratic system in terms of child mortality rate. Furthermore, even those countries that took transition from autocracy to democracy still cannot be categorical as in outperforming non-democratic regimes.

The author has chosen infant and child mortality as a template for study because other commonly used measures of well-being, such as poverty rates, school enrollment rates, and access to primary health care, tend to be less reliable (and less comparable) since their definitions vary from country to country and over time; the death of an infant, however, has the same lamentable qualities everywhere.

However the article distinctively showed the differences between democracy and non-democracy. Hence freedom of speech, electioneering process, rapid action to event, income redistribution, social services, universal political representation (suffrage) were identified.

Even if democracies increase social funding, however, they do not improve infant and child mortality rates which may be the most accurate and comprehensive indicator of social welfare among the poor.

The article tries to disprove the notion that there is correlation between democracy and poverty alleviation. It believes the reasons behind was multifaceted in that data of non-democratic countries were missing and some were not even studied. The argument is that High performing authoritarian states are not accounted for in view of their infant and child mortality rates. Since these states do not have much incentive to get from the international organizations much cannot be said of these states. Unlike the High performing authoritarian, international organization gets much more data from low performing authoritarian states. Hence those unaccounted for dismiss the argument that democracy is better-off than non-democracy in terms of infant and child mortality rates.

The article looked at the income strata of the society upon which it deduces that the most affected in all society are those in the bracket of low income. It proves that middle class and upper class do not face the problem of infant and child mortality rates as does the low income earner. Hence on what ground would one prove that democracy does better than non-democracy regime when it comes to child mortality. The further argument is that

democracy is mostly championed by the middle class hence within the range to petition government for certain necessities, meanwhile the low class vastly scattered in the country side do not have such opportunity.

By and large the summation is that democracy belongs to the upper and middle classes, hence by extension government is only response to these two classes. In essence those in the bottom income quintiles will enjoy the benefits of any downward redistribution only if the government is constrained to provide flat-rate benefits to all of its citizens. This the article sees as implausible.

The article might appears right yet the fact remains that some might argue that those countries transition from autocracy to democracy are still not full flesh democracies hence still lacking some principles that represent a grown democracy.

