

**US Foreign Policy
District of Colombia**

**James K. Galbraith, part 2
Taking it to the Bank**

**Green in the Red
EcoDebt**

**Ind-rael
Arranged Marriage**

**Where the Twain
Shall Meet
Life in a Refugee Camp**

Hunting For Gatherers

MICHAEL RYAN WISEMAN

For want of a nail the shoe was lost. For want of a shoe the horse was lost. For want of a horse the rider was lost. For want of a rider the battle was lost. For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.

Aside from the prevailing— and ominous— meaning of this proverb, i.e. permitting one tiny undesirable circumstance ensures a steady and inevitable decline toward massive disaster, another thread to be grasped at from our faithful adage is interconnectivity. Sow the wind with a butterfly's wing and reap a hurricane. Interconnectivity.

Networking abounds in the Alternatives International universe with the Quebec Social Forum (www.forumsocialquebecois.org) about to swing into gear. Thousands will swarm upon Montreal for a few hectic days, and it just goes to show how important the human connection still is. All the skypes, facebooks, twitters, et al. of the world cannot replace an old fashion flesh-pressing extravaganza when it comes to fomenting momentum.

The human is a social animal, a political animal. We gather. We gather in numbers, where there is safety, where there is energy, where there is possibility. We gather so we evolve.

Our organism, humanity, is a complex one indeed— evidently too complex to master as of yet, too ungainly to steer six billion toward a common goal. We are too fractured— splintered— to feel the weight of society upon our actions, a society that, otherwise, would govern our behaviour in the interest of our neighbour and, therefore, ourselves.



The networking of our lives must continue apace, thus re-establishing the communal bind that, though loosened temporarily but not irreparably during our great dispersion, will necessarily tauten once more as the panoptic architecture of our connectedness brings to bear the obligations we have always had towards one another, towards our organism.

But to say that the organism requires uniform action from its constituent cells is false, in fact the organism, in order to survive, requires just the opposite; that is, differentiated roles/ actions/

functions. The only unity required— and 'only' here represents a singularity and not a glib dismissal of the obvious difficulty of attaining it— the only unity required is that of purpose.

As grand of an aspiration as that may seem, remember that for generations lost past the horizons in all directions, that purpose was as it is now and always will be— to leave the world in better hands and, in so doing, to ensure our survival... and yours with it.

But how easy it is for each cell to write itself off as ineffectual and inconsequential! And how natural that this be so! After all, the eye sees not itself, the droplet cannot know its meaning, its importance, to the ocean. Must they all disappear before one can awaken to realize how quickly a desert would be made? How many droplets shall cede their place to desert before the others begin to worry less of their own place within the ocean and more for the ocean's battle against desertification?

Yes, the droplet cannot see its place in the ocean, but if all drops were to give themselves up for this very reason, how soon would they all see the desert then!

So as the waves roll into Quebec, let us cast our gaze past the offing and around this spinning blue marble, let us take heart from the Social Forums the world over. We are not alone. We gather.

Alternatives International Journal
is published by Alternatives, a member
of Alternatives International.

The articles represent the opinions
of the authors and not necessarily
those of Alternatives or Alternatives
International.

Contact Us!

Alternatives International
3720 Parc Avenue, #302
Montreal, Quebec, H2X 2J1
E-mail: michael@alternatives.ca

www.alterinter.org

Editorial Board: Myron Frankman
Vanessa Gordon
Connie Hackbarth
Emmanuel Martinez
Feroz Mehdi
Kari Polanyi-Levitt
Sergio Yahn

Editor: Michael Ryan Wiseman

Associate Editor: Ceyda Turan

Alternatives International Journal welcomes any and all comments, questions,
suggestions, and—especially—criticisms.

We are always looking for new contributors and ideas. If you would like to submit
an article for publication or get involved in any other way, do drop us a line.

Israel And India

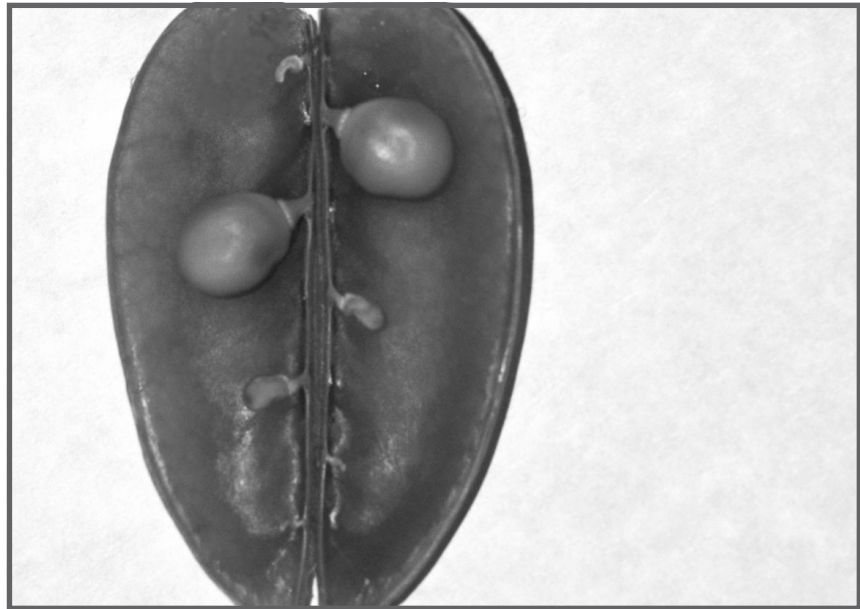
Not so strange bedfellows

ACHIN VANAİK

Neither the Indian government, the 'foreign policy establishment', the strategic elite, the mainstream media, nor that broader category loosely termed as the Indian middle class are seriously bothered by the plight of the Palestinians, or at all interested in there being a truly just settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. It was after the Cold War that the Indian establishment's attitude to Palestine could not escape the impact of the overall lurch rightwards of the centre of gravity of the Indian polity. At home this has meant much greater accommodation towards and acceptance of Hindutva, which applauds Zionism.

That Israel is a Jewish state, it says, should be welcomed and India should recognize that it is basically a Hindu nation requiring a representative Hindu state. Common to both Hindutva and Zionism is the belief that true democracy is majoritarian and must above all protect Hindus/Hinduism and Jews/Judaism respectively. It cannot and must not, therefore, assign full citizenship rights to other ethnic/religious groupings such as Muslims and Christians in India (Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists are subsumed under the label of Hindu since they are faiths originating in a Hindu India) or to the Palestinians or "Israeli Arabs" as they are called in Israel.

The forces of Hindutva are represented above all by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or National Volunteer Corps, comprising an estimated 2 million cadre force organized in some 60,000 branches throughout the country and which has as its political-electoral wing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as well as a host of other organizational offshoots. The RSS-BJP posit as their hostile and dangerous 'other' the Muslims, while for Israel it



Hindutva and Zionism: two peas in a pod, or don't give these peas a chance

is the Palestinians, mostly Muslim but also Christian. Hindutva thus sees an emotional-ideological affinity between itself and Zionism.

Complementing this presumed cultural affinity between Hindutva and Zionism are the new post-Cold War era strategic compulsions and realignments. Whether the BJP or the Congress Party reigns at the centre— independently or in a coalition— both are committed to deepening the India-Israel-US alliance. After the 2009 Indian elections, the current Congress-led ruling coalition will continue on this path.

Israel is now the second largest supplier of military equipment to India (after Russia, which might well be permanently overtaken in due course by both Israel and the US) and India is now Israel's biggest arms purchaser. In New Delhi, Israel is seen as a key conduit for influencing the US government which, while seeking to consolidate its strategic partnership with India also— to the irritation of India— feels the need to sustain its strategic ties with Pakistan.

In the US much of the politically active Indian diaspora believes that it must emulate and work with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) if it is to establish a powerful

and organized lobby in the elite decision-making circles that count in Washington. High-level representatives of both the BJP and the Congress Party have thus made it a point to visit Tel Aviv and to meet AIPAC leaders in the US. In addition, India and Israel are now collaborating ever more closely on anti-terrorism.

India must make occasional noises about Palestinian suffering along with mildly worded criticisms about Israel, but Tel Aviv knows these are pro-forma objections which mean little to nothing. With regard to the Palestinian struggle for justice, India— like the EU— will do two things: it will throw money to Palestinian agencies and pay lip service to its cause. Nothing more. The predominating view in India is, 'why should India be more pro-Palestinian than the Arab governments whom subordinate that cause to their own interests?'

So why should India not pursue its perceived national interests, which geopolitically means forging a strategic link with Israel and the US? Some argue that the traditionally non-aligned Indian national interest lay elsewhere— and that there are similarities between the

continued on page 11

The Arc of Instability

Doctor Monroe, I presume?

PEPE ESCOBAR

The New Great Game is not only focused on the face-off between the United States and its strategic competitors Russia and China, with Pipeline-istan as a defining element. The Full Spectrum Dominance doctrine instead requires the control of the Pentagon-coined “arc of instability” from the Horn of Africa to western China. The cover story is the former “global war on terror,” now “overseas contingency operations” under the management of President Barack Obama’s administration.

What Washington calls the “Western hemisphere” is a sub-section of the New Great Game. The linkage between the recent military coup in Honduras,

the return of the living dead—that is, the resurrection of the US Navy’s Fourth Fleet in July 2008—and now the turbo-charging of seven US military bases in Colombia, is not to be blamed merely on continuity from President George W Bush to Obama. This is all about the internal logic of Full Spectrum Dominance.

Touching Bases

Twelve South American nations, under the Union of South American Nations umbrella, got together in Bariloche, Argentina, last week and after a heated seven-hour discussion only managed to stress, somewhat meekly, that “foreign troops cannot be a threat to the region”—in reference to the US military presence in Colombia. At least President Lula da Silva of Brazil will be asking Obama to get together with South American presidents and reveal what this new military pact with Colombia is really all about.

It’s instructive to examine how some of the sharpest South American minds

view this. Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano (whose book, *Open Veins of Latin America*, was offered to Obama by Chavez at the recent Organization of American States summit) in an interview to an Ecuadorian paper, stressed how the US had spent a century fabricating military dictatorships in Latin America, so when there’s a military coup, such as in Honduras, Washington is at a loss for words.

As for the military bases in Colombia, Galeano said they “offend not only Latin America’s collective dignity, but one’s intelligence.”

The US has already set up three military bases in Colombia, plus a dozen radar stations. Now this will be upgraded by the Colombian government to seven bases, one of them—Palanquero—with air access to the entire hemisphere. Seven bases in Colombia is a natural Pentagon response to the US losing the Manta base in Ecuador, and losing its grip on now leftist



The Greatest Game

Photo: FLICKR/ JON A ROSS

Paraguay. Washington already trains the Colombian armed forces, special forces and the national police.

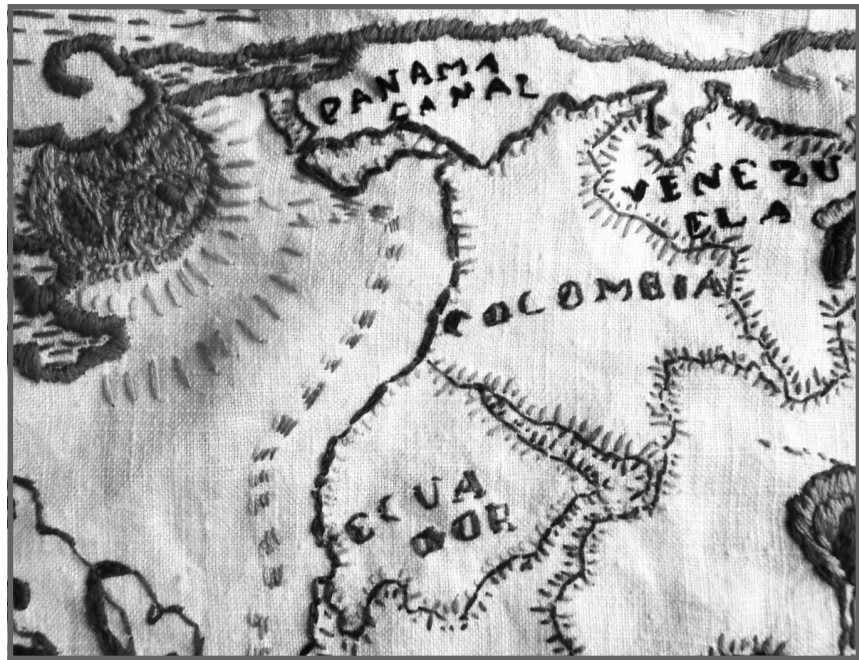
Argentine political scientist Atilio Boron goes for the jugular. For him, "To think that those troops and weapons systems are based in Latin America for some reason other than to ensure the territorial and political control of a region that experts consider the richest on the planet in terms of its natural resources—water, energy, biodiversity, minerals agriculture, etc.—would be unforgivably stupid."

American political activist and author, Noam Chomsky, in an interview to Venezuelan-American lawyer Eva Golinger during the former's recent visit to Venezuela, explained how the "rose wave" of South American leftism is scaring Washington so much that it is forcing it to collaborate with every government that would have been summarily deposed a few decades ago. Chomsky refers to the Joao Goulart government in Brazil, which was toppled in 1964, giving way, under US supervision, to "the first national security state, neo-Nazi-style." Lula's policies today are not that different from Goulart's.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization All Over Again

Colombia has received over US\$5 billion from the Pentagon since Plan Colombia was launched by President Bill Clinton way back in the year 2000. Colombian President Alvaro Uribe rules over a captivated land infested with paramilitaries and extra-judicial killings; scores of peasants and trade unionists have been killed in cold blood.

In a 1991 unclassified Pentagon intelligence report, then-senator Alvaro Uribe Velez is described as "dedicated to collaboration with the Medellin cartel at high government levels." The report stresses Uribe "has worked for the Medellin cartel and is a close personal friend of Pablo Escobar Gaviria," the archetypal, now dead, Colombian drug lord. No wonder Uribe has always fiercely fought any possible form of extradition treaty.



Sewing up the loose ends

Boron describes Uribe as "the empire's Trojan Horse." It is this Trojan Horse that allows a counter-insurgency operation to be packaged as a "war on drugs." Colombia remains the number one supplier of cocaine to the US, Plan Colombia or not.

The counter-insurgency is also in large part directed against Venezuela's Chavez, who, in his innumerable casual moments, makes no secret that he "knows Uribe, and his psychology, very well." Golinger, author of *Bush vs Chavez: Washington's War on Venezuela*, told *Russia Today* that "Plan Colombia really does not have the objective of addressing directly the war on drugs," it is more about the "control of natural resources and strategic resources."

The beauty of Plan Colombia is its one-size-fits-all status, from AfPak to Mexico. In April 2007, the former US ambassador to Colombia, William Wood, was sent to Afghanistan to implement a Plan Colombia, i.e. counter-insurgency disguised as a war on drugs. Colombia is a mirror of Afghanistan, and vice-versa. Counter-insurgency-heavy Afghanistan still produces over 90% of the world's opium.

Inevitably, that is where NATO comes

in. The only part of the world where NATO is still not active is South America. That said, a few months ago the head of the Pentagon's Southern Command, Admiral James Stavridis, became NATO supreme commander. Indeed, three of the past five NATO top military commanders—Stavridis, Bantz Craddock and Wesley Clark—moved to NATO from the Southern Command.

Little wonder then that Bolivian President Evo Morales said in Cuba, in mid-July, "I have first-hand information that the empire, through the US Southern Command, made the coup d'etat in Honduras." And all this while not only Mexico and Argentina, but also Brazil and Ecuador, are on their way to decriminalizing drugs.

War on drugs? So much for the cover story. More like the Pentagon, to paraphrase Galeano, insulting Latin America's intelligence.

PEPE ESCOBAR is the author of *Globalistan: How the Globalized World is Dissolving into Liquid War* (Nimble Books, 2007) and *Red Zone Blues: a snapshot of Baghdad during the surge*. His new book, just out, is *Obama does Globalistan* (Nimble Books, 2009). This Article was first published in *Asia Times* on September 3, 2009

Life in a Refugee Camp

Hope for the Hopeless

JEREMY WILDEMAN

Life is never easy growing up in a refugee camp. It is a life of poverty, limited access to education, lack of access to sporting or recreational facilities and few opportunities. Hopelessness and despair abound. This is a reality that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have known as their childhood for the past 60 years.

Of these refugees, 486 479 live scattered among 19 refugee camps across the West Bank with 45 392 living in Nablus' four main refugee camps. In addition, the Old City of Nablus houses many poor families of refugee origin while not far north of the city lies the Al Far'a Refugee Camp. In total, there are 762 820 refugees living in the West Bank. From 1950 to 2008 the number of registered Palestinian refugees has grown overall from 914 221 to 4 618 141.

These camps suffer from suffocating high population densities. For example, the 22 855 of Balata refugee camp live on less than 2 square kilometers of land. Their populations are young, with 60% less than 19 years old. Families live in square, concrete houses with just a few rooms; homes ill-equipped to deal with the extreme heat of the Summer and cold of the Winter. Water is limited and often unclear, plumbing very basic and sewage systems inadequate.

These refugees were plunged into even greater poverty after being cut-off from the Israeli labor market at the beginning of the Second Intifada. The camps are so crowded that the typical street is barely wider than a grown man's shoulders. Only a couple streets are wide enough to accommodate a vehicle. The camps are becoming ever more crowded, with growing populations and limited opportunities for these refugees to make a life elsewhere. Most houses are designed to facilitate continued expansion upwards. They have unfinished flat

roofs. At each corner juts out a square concrete pillar with rebar poking out at the center, with the expectation that a new floor will be added in the future.

At street level sunlight is limited; facilities for children more so. Extracurricular activities and play spaces are much needed, but so difficult to deliver. And even if these families had the money to send their children away from the camps for activities, during the Second Intifada there was always the fear that the children may run into the Israeli military when it invaded the city or camps.

With crowded classes and little to do when school is not in session, the limited street space becomes a "play" area for many boys. The situation is worse for girls, who often remain confined to their cramped houses due to traditional social restrictions which are becoming tighter by the year. Many girls develop weak muscles and poor balance because of a lack of physical activity.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provides many services to these refugee camps. This includes public education up to the ninth grade, after which refugee children enter the Palestinian school system outside the camps. With a limited budget, rapidly growing populations and no solution in sight for the refugees, the UNRWA system is an overburdened school system. UNRWA classes are very overcrowded, with an average of 50 pupils per class.

To make matters worse, the refugee camps have been the site of the worst and most constant fighting of the Second Intifada. Many youth turned to the armed militias seeing it as a means of self-empowerment in their violent environment. The children are universally traumatized. Many suffer sleep deprivation because they are

afraid to sleep for fear of an Israeli military raid during the night to arrest a family member.

Problems with classroom behavior is a serious issue, preventing effective education in their crowded classrooms. Many children fall asleep in class after failing to sleep at night. Others disrupt the class, often because they suffer from traumatic stress disorders. Violence at school is endemic and rising every year: student against student, student against teacher, and teacher against student. A lack of qualified teachers has forced UNRWA to place female teachers in boys' schools, presenting a whole set of other problems in maintaining classroom discipline in a sexually segregated society.

Failure rates are high in the UNRWA schools, particularly in Arabic (40%), Mathematics and English (50 - 60%). It is not uncommon for children to drop out of school at the age of 13 or 14, particularly boys, while enrollment rates have dropped from 96.8% in 2000 to 91.2% in 2007. In the north of the West Bank, conditions are worst in the Balata, Askar, Jenin and Tulkarem refugee camps. Decline in academic achievement has been significant. Currently the majority of boys from Balata camp fail their Tawjihi (high school) exams.

UNRWA has difficulties maintaining just the basic classes and has no or limited resources for developmental activities, such as art, music and sport. While many organizations provide training for UNRWA staff, which is of course valuable, UNRWA lacks teachers and resources. Increasingly UNRWA is turning to external NGOs to try to fill the education gap. This is where Project Hope steps in.

From its inception, much of Project Hope's work has been focused on Palestinian refugees. Project Hope is a uniquely mixed Canadian and Palestinian non-governmental organization (NGO) whose mandate is to improve the lives of Palestinian children and youth. It has been operational since 2003. It focuses its assistance on the areas most neglected by aid assistance, not coincidentally those areas which are

also the most ill-affected by the conflict. Project Hope is based out of the city of Nablus and is most active in the northern West Bank. It provides educational and recreational activities to children and youth through partner community centers and schools by a combination of Palestinian staff, overseeing Palestinian and International volunteer instructors.

By partnering with UNRWA schools, Project Hope provides the developmental activities as well as extra teachers to carry them out, which is extra valuable because UNRWA is short on teachers. In particular demand in the UNRWA partnership are classes in English as a

Second Language, Photography and Art.

Project Hope also works with a variety of other organizations in the Palestinian civil society. Volunteering with Project Hope can help increase the capacity of these partnerships, such as with UNRWA, to reach more children with activities that are not only intrinsic to childhood development but to help them deal psychologically with the conditions they are growing up in. An increase in the number of volunteer instructors will also allow Project Hope to work in more locations outside of Nablus, with the immediate goal of supporting partners in the Jenin and Tulkarem districts.

Ultimately the best solution is to end the occupation and to improve the conditions that Palestinians are living under, helping them to develop once again self-sustaining societies that do not need foreign aid and intervention, which is in the interest of all parties involved in the Middle East. However, for now, we need to keep doing our best to alleviate the suffering and improve the conditions of the future generation of Palestinians.

JEREMY WILDEMAN is the co-founder of Project Hope and its executive director. For more information about Project Hope, go to www.projecthope.ps.



Photo: FLOCKR/ DAVID ORTMANN

Hope springs eternal

The Economic Crisis and Obama's Response

Part 2 of 2

JAMES K. GALBRAITH

The Obama administration's bank bailout could work to save the major banking institutions. But there are two problems. One problem is that there is no reason why we should have or will have, over the next several decades, a banking system that is as large in relation to the economy as we have had for the last couple of decades.

The banking system grew enormously in relation to the economy after around 1994 as a result of a couple of credit bubbles: information technology and housing. It will shrink. It has to shrink. Going forward, we are not going to have -- anyway we should not have -- a banking system that pays ten percent of all wages and earns thirty percent of all profits, which was the case just a few years ago.

The issue, then, is which banks will shrink? Which will be squeezed out? Will it be the very large number of very small banks-- that are largely community-oriented, that were largely conservatively managed, and largely avoided involvement in sub prime securities and in toxic mortgage assets, generally speaking, and which are solvent today but deeply affected by rising insurance imposed by the FDIC to pay for the crisis? Or will it be a handful of large banks that were at the root of this disaster?

Some of these large banking institutions are, arguably, too large to be managed even by their own leadership let alone regulated by public authority. They are deeply complex international institutions designed to make money by tax and regulatory arbitrage, i.e. a very large part of their business is effectively legal tax evasion and regulatory avoidance. If you are too big to regulate, you are too big to manage.

The head of AIG-- an insurance company admittedly, but as the major issuer of credit default swaps a firm that is at the heart of this crisis-- wrote in the Washington Post that when he was installed last fall it became clear to him that the organization was too big to operate as a going concern. If that is true of an insurance company, it is probably true of certain other major financial institutions.

It is therefore ill-advised -- the word that first came to mind was "insane"-- to design a financial policy that is intended to preserve those institutions as they presently are, thereby forcing the adjustment onto everybody else.

The second problem with the bailout plan is its objective of restoring the flow of credit. Is that likely to succeed? The answer is that the argument-- indeed the whole metaphor-- is based on a misconception.

Credit is not a flow. It is not a liquid. It is not something that goes from high in the banking system down to the rest of us, the borrowers, at a rate governed by the amount of money that happens to be inside the banks. Banks are not moneylenders. They do not need money in order to lend. Credit is not a flow. Credit is a contract.

A contract is a bilateral relationship between a lender and a borrower. It is based, in part, upon the prospect of profitability. That is, it is based on the underlying condition of the economy and the optimism felt within the population for the economic future on the one hand, and on the other, the value of collateral, which is the security you can put up against a loan. In this environment the prospects are exceedingly bleak and the collateral-- namely the housing stock-- has fallen so far in value that it

will not support lending no matter what happens to the capitalization of the banks.

It seems illusory to believe that the Treasury's bailout plan-- even if it were appropriately designed to create an effective restructuring of the financial system, which it wasn't-- would achieve the overlying economic purpose of restoring credit flows.

So, what should be done now?

It is imperative to tackle the problem head on and recognize that the government has to be larger than the largest commercial bank. It has to be capable of dealing with whatever problems the banking system throws at it. If that means banks need to be restructured, downsized, broken up, and sold, then that should happen as quickly as possible. The legal authority to do this largely exists and the practice of doing it is well-established.

In the savings and loan crisis under the late Reagan and George H. W. Bush Administrations scores of troubled or insolvent institutions were taken over by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board; their assets were evaluated in a penetrating and independent way by new management before they were handed off to the Resolution Trust Corporation and sold at an appropriate value. The institutions themselves either closed or kept operating in insolvency until economic conditions improved and they could be re-floated as viable, going concerns. This happened. It continues to happen today, including last year with the takeover of IndyMac in California by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

It is clear that taking over a very large institution is a different proposition in a technical sense, but it is not a different proposition in a legal sense and it is certainly not a different proposition from the standpoint of economic necessity.

With respect to fiscal policy -- public spending -- and what the government does directly to support the economy, it is essential to recognize that what needs doing needs to be done for the long term. This is not going to be over

within two years. What is needed is a range of new institutions capable of dealing with our economic dilemmas and our problems well into the future. For two or three decades, public infrastructure has been neglected; it is in deeply decrepit condition. The reconstruction of the country needs to be financed on an ongoing basis very much as Franklin Roosevelt did in the New Deal: something that can engage the energies and activities of the whole country for a long period of time.

This is of particular importance as we confront the problems of energy security and climate change. Energy security, because if we do not engineer ourselves to have economic expansion without increasing the demand for oil, we will become victims of increases

in the oil price almost as soon as the recovery gets off the ground, and that will tend to forestall the realization of sustained growth over time. Climate change, because if we do not rebuild the country in such a way as to keep our total energy demands and greenhouse gas emissions down on a sustainable basis, the country itself will not be habitable in finite time.

On the bright side... maybe there is no bright side. But I do think that it will become reasonably clear that the first round of the Obama New Deal was not sufficient and we will have another round of debate over what should be done. It is going to be a very dangerous period because every snake oil salesman in the country will be out claiming that their own remedy was the right one in the first

place; but we will at least have a chance to revisit the issues of renewable energy and protection of the environment. These two areas, it seems to me, are the most important and— with persistence— there is at least some hope that eventually they might prevail.

JAMES K. GALBRAITH is Chair of the Board of Economists for Peace and Security, and author of *The Predator State: How Conservatives Abandoned the Free Market and Why Liberals Should Too* (Free Press, 2008). This text is based upon a Galbraith lecture at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts. The entire lecture (AIJ's two-part series is covering but a fraction) is forthcoming in the journal *Human Geography*, Volume 2, Number 2, 2009.



A problem of scale

Ecological Debt

Day of Reckoning

VINOD RAINA

On the 3rd of December 1984, 40 tonnes of toxic gases escaped from the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India. The result was catastrophic. 3,000 people—men, women, and children—were dead within the hour; after 72 hours the death toll had tripled. Over 22,000 have died to date from gas-related afflictions, and permanent injuries run into the hundreds of thousands. The local ecosystem is likewise suffering; water and soil are laden with toxins that are hundreds of times more prevalent than can be safely absorbed by humans and local wildlife. The Bhopal Gas Disaster highlights the environmental and human costs of laissez-faire industry, while serving as yet another example of the debt that the North is quickly racking up in the South—ecological debt.

Today's environmental destruction of the South is an extension of a legacy of ecological plunder dating back to colonisation. Spices, plants, animals and germplasm, land, gold and other minerals, oil and other fossil fuels; the wealth of the West is built on the bedrock of their plunder.

The 500 hundred-year rise of Europe culminated with domination over the globe—its resources as much as its peoples. The words of Cecil Rhodes, an influential force in the British expansion in 19th century Africa, crystallises this relationship succinctly:

"We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit cheap slave labour that is available from the natives of the colonies. The colonies would also provide a dumping ground for the surplus goods produced in our factories."

In the world market that was created by Europe, a large surplus of natural

resources and cheap or forced labour was extracted from the subordinate colonial economies. Although some development did take place in the colonies, their economies were almost entirely geared to the needs of the home economies.

In his prologue to 'Ecological Imperialism' the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900, Alfred W. Crosby asks "Perhaps European humans have triumphed because of their superiority in arms, organisation and fanaticism, but what in heaven's name is the reason that the Sun never sets on the empire of the dandelion?" He also provides an answer, "Perhaps the success of European imperialism has a biological, an ecological component".

Rethinking Debt

The ecological debt of the North to the South is not just historical, but continues to be accumulated even today. A persuasive definition of ecological debt is that of the Accion Ecologica of Ecuador, according to which:

The Debt accumulated by the Northern industrial countries towards the Third World countries on account of resource plundering, environmental damages, and the free occupation of environmental space to deposit wastes, such as greenhouse gases. Those who abuse the biosphere, transgress ecological limits and enforce unsustainable patterns of resource extraction of a

range of natural resources must begin to discharge this ecological debt. The ecological debt accumulated through such processes as the extraction of a range of natural resources, ecologically unequal terms of trade externalising ecological costs, the appropriation of traditional knowledge, for example, of seeds and plants, on which the modern agri-business and biotechnology are based, contamination of the atmosphere through the emission of various greenhouse gases, producing and testing chemical and nuclear weapons in countries of the South, and the dumping of chemicals and toxic waste in the Third World. The current system of neo-liberal globalised market economy maintains and augments the ecological debt through such mechanisms as the SAPs imposed by the international financial institutions, foreign investments, unequal terms of trade, forcing countries to produce export products in order to redress financial debts; and through the trade-related Intellectual Property Rights within the WTO which protect the patenting of genetic material for agriculture and pharmacology by TNCs without compensation for the original guardians of the biodiversity of the South¹.

In recent years, with the threat of climate change looming large over the entire planet, the concept of ecological debt is increasingly appreciated. As industrialized countries continue to



A big footprint

Photo: WIKIMEDIA/ LUCA FREDIANI

*Israel and India
continued from page 3*

plight of the Palestinians and another long-suffering people.

To wit, connect the Dalit upsurge in India to the solidarity movement for Palestine. Racism must be understood in broader terms as encompassing various forms of exclusionist ideologies founded not just on biologically or physically determined markers, but also on cultural ones. Thus cultural identity markers, when used for the purposes of institutionalized discrimination, are also to be seen as forms of racist injustice. Both casteism and Zionism come into this category of culturally based discriminations. You do not have to be a Palestinian to empathize with the Palestinian cause. Palestinians are fighting for much more than just their national liberation; they are fighting for progressives everywhere.

ACHIN VANAİK is a Professor of International Relations and Global Politics in the Political Science Department of Delhi University

*Ecological Debt
continued from page 10*

squat on the development space of less-developed countries, academic research is beginning to show its true cost.

A calculation sponsored by the British Government, for example, revealed that at a bargain price of US\$20 per ton of carbon dioxide emitted, the developed countries owe the poor countries US\$13 trillion each year. Contrast this with the total external financial debt of all the indebted poor and developing countries, which is just under US\$3 trillion. And that is just the climate debt, which is only a component of the ecological debt.

Indeed a landmark 2008 University of California Berkeley study entitled "The debt of nations and the distribution of ecological impacts from human activities" conservatively estimated the environmental costs of human activities in low-, middle- and high-income countries from 1961- 2000 in six major categories: climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion,

agricultural intensification and expansion, deforestation, overfishing, and mangrove conversion; it notes that, "through disproportionate emissions of greenhouse gases alone, the rich group may have imposed climate damages on the poor group greater than the latter's current foreign debt."

That the rest of the world is finally coming to terms with ecological debt and its terrible human consequences must be but scant consolation to the victims of the Bhopal Gas Disaster. However, as is the case with such tragedies, one must clutch at whatever silver lining can be found by hoping that the lessons will not be lost as easily as the lives and will be remembered for just as long.

VINOD RAINA is the editor of The Dispossessed Victims of Development in Asia (Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives- ARENA, 1997). A physicist by profession, Vinod is also one of the pioneers of the People's Science Movement in India, having helped set up the All-India People's Science Network (AIPSN) and the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS).

alternatives
INTERNATIONAL
Journal

**Alternatives International
Journal needs your support!**

You can subscribe to Alternative International Journal for \$25/year and receive it at your door.

Send this coupon with your cheque to:

Alternatives International
3720 Parc Avenue, # 302
Montreal, (Quebec)
H2X 2J1

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Something to Report

What will Goldstone deliver?

RAMZY BAROUD

"We may be witnessing the beginning of the end of the era of impunity," Nadia Hijab, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Institute for Palestine Studies, was quoted by IPS in response to the findings of a 574-page report by a four-member United Nations Fact finding mission. The mission, led by internationally-renowned former South African supreme court justice and chief prosecutor in the international tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia, investigated alleged war crimes committed by Israeli troops in Gaza in a 23-day bloody, unprecedented onslaught against a largely defenseless population.

But Hijab was not the only one who expressed optimism. Others did, encouraged perhaps, by the report's use of terminology unfamiliar in a conflict where empirical experience has shown that Israeli actions, no matter how outrageously violent, will have no meaningful legal repercussions whatsoever.

Goldstone's report, released on September 15, made some important recommendations, following a thorough investigation that was carefully compiled by the mission – which was organized by the UN Human Rights Council last April.

One is that the UN Security Council should set up a team of experts to monitor Israel's investigations of the war crimes committed in Gaza. If Israel fails to do so, then the situation should be referred to the Prosecutor in the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"The mission concluded that actions amounting to war crimes, and possibly in some respects crimes against humanity, were committed by the Israel Defense Force," Goldstone told reporters on September 16. He also

said that the Israeli government has carried out no credible investigation.

Despite his recommendations that UN experts follow the progress of the internal investigation by Israel, and the Palestinians (since they too were accused of violating international law by lobbing home-made rockets into Israel without taking into account the possible harm to civilians), it is puzzling



why Goldstone would think that any genuine investigation is possible in the first place.

The events in Gaza resulted in the deaths of 1,387 (other estimates put the number at 1,417, mostly civilians, including over 300 children), the wounding of thousands more, the targeting of an already dilapidated infrastructure (hospitals, police stations, factories, schools, and even chicken farms).

Palestinians were also chastised for rockets fired from Gaza. Of course, Goldstone was not expected to justify or applaud the homemade rockets, or even underline their lack of effectiveness— four Israelis were killed by rocket fire, during the period of the war. Out of the nine Israeli soldiers killed in the fighting, four were killed in friendly fire.

While both Hamas and the PA fully cooperated with Goldstone and his

colleagues, Israel fully rejected the mission, refusing entry into Israel or Gaza, forcing the use of alternative routes into the besieged strip, through Egypt.

Israeli officials claim that the report was pre-written, rendering it biased from the start. Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesman said the report created unjust "equivalence of a democratic state with a terror organization," in reference to Hamas before adding, "We have nothing to be ashamed of, and don't need lessons in morality from a committee established by Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Somalia."

Goldstone called on the 192-member General Assembly to establish an escrow fund so that Israel can compensate Palestinians in Gaza. Meanwhile the Human Rights Council is convening on September 29 in Geneva to discuss the report and could call for its transfer to the Security Council, or even to the ICC.

"Perhaps next time we set out to wage another vain and miserable war, we will take into account not only the number of fatalities we are likely to sustain, but also the heavy political damage such wars cause," wrote Israeli columnist Gideon Levy.

One would have to wait for the next miserable war, the next massacre to find out whether Israel has learned its lesson. Until then, the desperate yet resilient Palestinians in Gaza continue to live in their makeshift tents, atop the rubble that was once called home, awaiting food, cement and international justice.

RAMZY BAROUD (www.ramzybaroud.net) has authored several books and is the editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*. His work has been published in many newspapers, journals and anthologies around the world. His latest book is, "The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle" (Pluto Press, London), and his forthcoming book is, "My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story" (Pluto Press, London), which is now available for pre-orders at Amazon.